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**The Non-Conformist Intellectual's Role as a Socio-Political
Activist in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Wizard of the Crow***

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Abstract

The study of the intellectual character in the African novel can be done in two parts, namely: the conformist intellectual, on one part and the non-conformist intellectual on the other. This paper focuses on the non-conformist intellectual. Generally, the paper is basically an analysis of the non-conformist intellectual's role as a socio-political activist in Ngugi's *Wizard of the Crow*. The obvious absence of critical attention on *Wizard of the Crow* gives this study a special place in Ngugi's scholarship. Indeed, this paper is pathbreaking and it is meant to open up discussions on Ngugi's classic of postcolonial African experience, *Wizard of the Crow*. This is clearly visible in this present researcher's attempt at paying adequate attention to the intellectual perspective in the novel. The paper gives us an insight into the roles of the non-conformist intellectual in the novel. The role of Kamiti, the non-conformist intellectual in the novel, is appreciated more through a study of his alienation from the socio-political values of the power structure in the novel; and in his desire to play an important part as a leader in the fight for the liberation of the poor masses of Aburiria. How Kamiti translates his ideas into reality, and Ngugi's vision of the society are also carefully examined in this paper. And through the activities of

Kamiti, and Nyawira (another non-conformist intellectual in the novel), Ngugi's idea of the African intellectual as the valid hope for a properly planned resistance to the socio-political order is highlighted in this paper. This is shown in the properly planned resistance against the socio-political order in place already in the society that is led by both of them, Kamiti and Nyawira. This has also shown that Ngugi is on the side of the intellectual who refuses to join forces with oppressive elements in the society. Kamiti and Nyawira are exemplary of such non-conformist intellectuals.

Introduction

Ngugi was born on January 5, 1938 at Kamiriithu, near Limuru, Kiambu District of one of Kenya's largest ethnic nations, the Gikuyu. He is the fifth child of his mother, the third of his father's four wives. The British Imperial Act of 1915 turned his peasant-farmer father (Thiong'o wa Nducu) to a squatter in his own father's land. However, his father was still able to send him to school. He attended a mission-run school in Limuru. He moved from Limuru to Alliance High School, Gikuyu, another school that is based on Western tradition. At these schools, he did not learn only the ways of the Western world; he also learnt a few things about his people's culture. And he has continued to hold on to these things he learnt earlier in life till date, as can be seen in his works. He got a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Makerere University College, Kampala, Uganda in 1963. He also attended University of Leeds in England. His marriage to Nyambura in 1961 is blessed with six children.

With this educational background and as a Marxist writer, he uses his works to challenge the activities of bad leaders who misrule their nation, and maltreat the masses. Oliver Lovesey has written that: "Ngugi's stance as an African intellectual has shifted from neocolonial alienation, through decolonization and political engagement, to intellectual activism." (141) He does this, mainly, through the creation of some heroic characters. These heroic characters are variously described as intellectual heroes or intellectuals. This paper uses the latter term to identify these characters who usually take to class conscious socio-political activism as a way of fighting or challenging these bad leaders.

Ngugi, as a creative writer can be referred to as a man of many parts: He is a playwright, a novelist, a short story writer, and a writer of children's literature; he is also an essayist and a literary critic. His plays are *The Black Hermit* (1963) and *This Time Tomorrow* (1970). He co-authored two other plays: *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (1976), with Micere Githae Mugo; and *I Will Marry When I Want* (1977), with Ngugi wa Mirii. His novels are *Weep Not, Child* (1964), *The River Between* (1965), *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), *Petals of Blood* (1997), *Devil on the Cross* (1980), *Matigari ma Njiruungi* (1986), and *Wizard of the Crow* (2006). *Secret Lives and other stories* (1976) is a collection of his short stories. His essays or critical works are:

Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture, and Politics (1972), *Writers in Politics: Essays* (1981), *Education for a National Culture* (1981), *Barrel of a Pen: Resistance to Repression in Neo-Colonial Kenya* (1983), *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (1986), *Writing Against Neo-Colonialism* (1986), *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedom* (1993), and *Penpoints, Gun-points and Dreams: The Performance of Literature and Power in Post-Colonial Africa* (1996). *Re-membering Africa* (2009) and *Dreams in a Time of War: a Childhood Memoir* (2010) are among his latest essays. His *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary* (1981) is more of a prison memoir. Some of his children's literatures are *Njamba Nene and the Flying Bus* (1986), *Njamba Nene and the Cruel Chief* (1988), and *Njamba Nene's Pistol* (1990).

Ngugi champions cultural nationalism through his essays. This explains why most of his works now have Gikuyu language versions. In fact, some of his works are written first in Gikuyu, before they are translated to English language. He started writing in his native Gikuyu language since 1977, after he was detained. His children's literature are all written in Gikuyu first: *Njamba Nene na Mbaathi (Njamba Nene and the Flying Bus)*, *(Njamba Nene na Chibu King'angi (Njamba Nene and the Cruel Chief)*, and *Bathitoora ya Njamba Nene (Njamba Nene's Pistol)*. *Matigari ma Njiruungi* was first written in Gikuyu by him before being translated to English, under the title *Matigari* (1989) by Wangui wa Goro. *Wizard of the Crow*, our focus for this paper, was first published under the Gikuyu title *Murogi was Kagogo*, in 2004.

Wizard of the Crow is about intellectuals who take to class-conscious socio-political activism so as to save the dying masses from the oppressive political class. A closer study of Ngugi's novel reveals that his prophecy of a soon-to-come saviour comes to fruition through the creation of a character like Kamiti—a non-conformist intellectual. The novel makes it clear that Ngugi's repeated preoccupation with messianic leadership and education (in his earlier works) still remains his major theme. This preoccupation seems to have re-emerged as the intellectual perspective that is inherent in his *Wizard of the Crow*. Unlike what it is like in his earlier works, Ngugi's intention is made very clear in this novel; from the outset he creates a situation where one group continues to fight the other. Whereas he creates communities that fail to articulate their goals and actions in his earlier works, the same cannot be said of his *Wizard of the Crow*. This paper shows that the writer's intentions are made clear from the outset.

In terms of size and structure, the novel does elicit some interesting comments from critics. *Wizard of the Crow* is a voluminous novel that is made up of 768 pages. It seems that it is for the sake of making the novel easy to read that the author divides it into six books of different and interesting sub-titles. Book one,

“Power Daemons,” is made up fifteen chapters; book two, “Pursuing Daemons,” is made up of three different sections of eighteen, twenty two and sixteen chapters respectively; book three, “Female Daemons,” is divided into three sections of nineteen, twenty four and seventeen chapters respectively; book four, “Male Daemons,” is also divided into three sections of twenty six, twenty two and twenty six chapters respectively; in book five, “Rebel Daemons,” we have three sections of thirty, thirteen and three chapters in that order: the last chapter, “Bearded Daemons,” is made up of just fourteen chapters.

This paper which is a study of the non-conformist intellectual’s role as a socio-political activist is done in four parts. The first part is the review of literature; the second is on the non-conformist intellectual’s inner rhythm; the third focuses on how the non-conformist intellectual translates his ideas into reality; and the fourth is on Ngugi’s vision of the society in relation to his ideas of the African intellectual.

Review of Literature

Ngugi wa Thiong’o is an established writer who has made a lot of contribution to African and world literature. Before the publication of his recent novel, *Wizard of the Crow*: our focus for this work, critics have been writing on his earlier novels. However, not much has been written from the perspective of the intellectual as a character type in his fiction. It is important, however to review the little that has been done on the *Wizard of the Crow* as reflected in the blurb of the novel and comments posted on *wikipedia*. As contained in the blurb,

Wizard of the Crow dramatizes with searing humour and piercing observation a battle for control of the souls of the Aburirian people. Fashioning the stories of the powerful and the ordinary into a dazzling mosaic, Ngugi wa Thiong’o reveals humanity in all its surprising intricacy (n.p.).

Implicit in the quotation above is the fact that Ngugi has, through the novel, attempted a fictional representation of the problems of leadership in most African nations. Ngugi’s Aburiria could stand as a representative country for any post-colonial African state that is beset with leadership problems. Of course most of these countries are Another comment in the blurb reaffirms this point: “[Ngugi’s] Aburiria is recognizable as modern Africa in all its splendor [sic], squalor, economic malaise and venality...” (n.p.) These comments on the blurb present the novel as an attack on all sorts of oppression and bad governance in Africa, especially the misuse of political and economic power by African political leaders. Critics agree that Ngugi uses the novel to launch serious attacks against African dictators, whether in military or civilian garb.

Ngugi states clearly on the title page of his *Wizard of the Crow* that the novel is “a translation from Gikuyu by the author [himself].” It is this aspect of the novel that interests a reviewer simply identified as Eric on a review of the novel posted on *wikipedia*. Eric notes that Ngugi’s idea of writing a novel, first, in Gikuyu and then translating his novel, later, into English, is indeed wonderful. As he (Eric’s) writes: “Ngugi...expresses himself fully and freely in his true mother tongue. Then he translates it into world language English”. (n.p.) According to the reviewer, Ngugi ought to be celebrated for his ingenuity in creating such a work as his hugely successful novel. This assertion seems to be based on the fact that Ngugi is able to get his message across to the poor masses, peasants of his native Kenya, who can only understand the native language, Gikuyu; and also to the rest of the world, through English, an international language. The readership will not only be among those who understand Gikuyu; the translation of the novel has made it possible for those who understand English language, who are of course more in number than those who understand Gikuyu to read the novel.

James Gibbons of *Bookforum*, in his review-comments, asserts that the novel is about the effects of corruption in post-colonial African states (*The Complete Review* 2, 3). Gibbons also hints of a phantasmagoria of fights by the masses for self realization and liberation from pseudo political leaders.

Elizabeth Owuor’s position contrasts sharply with that of Gibbons. According to her, Ngugi “contrast[s] two parallel worlds—that of the powerful and that of the powerless” in his work (*The Complete Review* 3). The powerful elite class of Ngugi’s Aburiria continues to get rich while the powerless poor masses continue to get poorer, according to Owuor (3).

The narrative technique of the text is what catches the attention of Keith Garebian of *The Globe and Mail*. As he has written: “the novel is really about re-centring the author’s discourse in Africa itself by a radical focus on multiple African voices. There are many tellers of tales in this saga, and each has an individual authenticity.” (*The Complete Review* 3) Garebian is of the view that Ngugi’s novel is an effort that is geared towards redirecting the readers’ attention towards the problem of leadership in Africa, through the use of multiple “voices” which underscore the problem of poor leadership in Africa.

Jeff Turrentine concerns himself with Ngugi’s attempt at fusing his experiences or ideas of African oral literature with the written literature (*The Complete Review* 3).

Andrew van der Vlies echoes the views of Gibbons. He writes that the novel is “Ngugi’s most barbed (even bitter) satire on the betrayal of independence by

corrupt governments in neo-colonial Africa” (*The Complete Review* 5). van der Vlies reviews the position of “leaders” who do not really have anything to offer the led.

Aminatta Forna concentrates on the magical powers possessed by the two major characters of the novel (n.p). Forna also writes on Ngugi’s concern with “speech and silence” in his works, Ngugi’s handling of these twin issues of speech and silence is what has placed him on such a high pedestal. Ngugi achieved international fame with his book, *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (1986). She quotes a section of this thought-provoking book in her review of Ngugi’s novel: “the bullet was the means of physical subjugation. Language was a means of spiritual subjugation” (qtd in Forna n.p.).

Going forward, this paper, as was the case in another essay, will draw a lot from Chidi Maduka’s *The Intellectual and Power Structure* (1999). He dwells on the role of the intellectual in novels of Peter Abrahams, Chinua Achebe, Richard Wright and Gustave Flaubert in his book.

The Non-Conformist Intellectual’s Inner Rhythm

At the core of Ngugi’s recent novels is a seldom-acknowledged crisis between two categories of intellectuals. While the conformist intellectual aligns with the power structure, the non-conformist intellectual tends to shift his focus towards activities that challenge the power structure of post-colonial institutions. Intellectuals who oppose post-colonial institutions in Africa tend to adopt a similar approach. First, they attempt to withdraw. They stand aloof and watch out for signs of improvements in the way the nation is governed. Then they begin to make attempts at seeking how the system can help them in their plight. This they do, for instance, by seeking for employment because most times, they are unemployed even when they possess the requisite expertise. The intellectuals soon realize that the neo-colonialists have nothing to offer them and fellow Africans. Consequently, the intellectual begins to identify himself with African cultural values and orientation, having realized that the neo-colonial African leaders have got nothing to offer.

The intellectual has been defined by Maduka as that individual that is endowed with special kind of knowledge that other people in the society lack (7). And, as Maduka further writes: the inner rhythm or forces of the intellectual is about that “intellectual’s consciousness of the political situation” around him, especially when the situation is not favourable to the people; and, the need to play some worthy role “by objectifying this consciousness in the form of political activism” (77). Inner rhythm plays an important role in determining the form of a character’s consciousness in a novel.

The structure of Kamiti’s inner rhythm sheds some light on, and even conditions the form of his socio-political activism. Two peculiar characteristics

dominate his rhythm: alienation and non-conformity. The two characteristics of Kamiti's inner rhythm mentioned above reveal first, his alienation from the socio-political "values" of the power structure in place in his country, Aburiria, and second, his desire to play an important role, as a leader, in the fight for the emancipation of the poor and downtrodden masses of his society.

The narrator presents Kamiti to the reader as a "tired, hungry, and thirsty [man that] felt beaten down by the sun" (38). The picture one gets of him from this kind of presentation is that of a poor beggar that wants to give up the struggle for life; but, a closer study of the novel will reveal that he is trying to alienate himself from the society. To him, the corruption that has permeated all facets of life in Aburiria is like "poison." That "this poison" has touched every aspect of life in Aburiria makes him wonder if there is "no place on earth or in the sky where a person might escape" it (39). The foregoing analysis suggests that he feels alienated from the society. The level of poverty in the nation (as a result of bad governance) nearly makes him eat "a piece of paper" he thought to be "bread...floating above his head" (48). He realizes that it "was a bit of newspaper" and immediately retrieves it from his mouth so that he can read it. The information he gets after reading the "newspaper" baffles him and at the same time re-awakens the social consciousness in him: "Machokali, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, was going to host a reception and a dinner at..." some five-star hotel for a four-man delegation from the Global Bank (48). The delegation is in the country "to discuss the proposed national project of a palace aspiring to Heaven's gate" (48). The message is that there will be a dinner party with lots of food in a five-star hotel for a four-man delegation from a certain organization from a foreign land when the nation cannot even feed its own. According to the novel, almost everybody in Aburiria has now turned to begging as their only source of livelihood. Kamiti is not only angry at this situation; his anger turns to frustration when the piece of newspaper he threw away "did not fall to the ground," it "was picked by the breeze and continues floating in the air, mockingly, conjuring images of food so near yet so far away, making him a tantalus in Eldares" (48).

Kamiti's reaction to events in his society reflects his desire to liberate Aburiria from post-colonial domination. For example, he refuses to sit down and watch things go at the pace dictated by the outer forces. This can be seen in his decision to look for a job, instead of working for the government (50). His search takes him to Eldares Modern Construction and Real Estate. Here he meets a member of the corrupt political regime, Titus Tajirika. His meeting with Tajirika leaves a bitter taste in his mouth because again he comes in contact with "the stench that had oppressed him in the streets of Eldares" (50).

However, his quest for a job, which takes him to Eldares Modern Construction and Real Estate, affords him the opportunity of meeting another non-

conformist character in the novel. He meets Nyawira. And it turns out that they both share certain things in common. The same characteristics that Kamiti's inner rhythm possesses are also present in Nyawira's inner rhythm. She is also greatly concerned about the future of Aburiria. The author informs us of this situation when he writes that "the stench that had oppressed [Kamiti] in the streets of Eldares had suddenly been replaced by a more powerful smell, a fresh one, like the scent of flowers, but there were no flowers in the room." (50)

It is evident from the quotation above that the reason for the fresh smell, which is acceptable and pleasant to Kamiti, is that Nyawira is different from her "boss," Tajirika. Whereas her "boss" is a conformist intellectual (as we have noted in another paper elsewhere), she is a non-conformist intellectual. She eventually becomes an ally of Kamiti. The way they both get used to each other so fast suggests that her inner rhythm can be described as one that is already moving at a full-blown level of non-conformity. She already works with an underground movement which opposes the power structure. The movement she leads is basically a socialist movement. Socialism implies a collective process of decision making and ownership of the means of production. Of course, as we have hinted earlier, her alliance with him further strengthens his ability to emerge as an admirable figure who is absolutely dedicated to the mission of challenging the political structure of his society. They become friends immediately and vow to marry each other, later.

Furthermore, it will be instructive to point out that they both remain committed to the mission of challenging the power structure, notwithstanding their love for each other. This is unlike the case of Achebe's Odili who divides his attention between love and politics because of his relationship with Edna, his girlfriend. Kamiti's fruitful relationship with Nyawira does a lot in presenting him as a non-conformist intellectual character that is without any form of contradiction. Kamiti is interested in Nyawira just as she is interested in him and in those things that interest him. This is what presents Kamiti as a character with a positive image. They both want to challenge the oppressive political regime. And, of course, his socio-political consciousness gains potency through his non-conformist disposition.

The second meeting of Kamiti and Nyawira turns out to be another coincidence. He had come to Paradise Hotel "where Machokali was hosting a welcome dinner for the visiting mission from the Global Bank" (72) to beg for alms while Nyawira's reason for being there at that moment is to disrupt the gathering, disguised as a beggar (74). As the narrator puts it, they turn out to be "two unfortunate beggars [who] found themselves being chased by three police officers" (75). He resolves at this point to fight the oppressive political authority to the end. With the help of Nyawira, the shrine of the wizard of the crow is set up (77). Later, thousands of helpless unemployed Aburirians thronged the shrine of the wizard of the

crow in search of help for their situations. This opportunity is seized by Kamiti (and Nyawira) to organize the masses by making them become aware of the insensitivity of the ruling class; hence, the revolution that was bound to happen in the novel.

Ngugi presents Kamiti as a character who is well-educated. He holds a “BA, Economics.” His second degree is “Master of business management, MBA” (53). He received his education at Madras University, India. Madras, now known as Chennai, is a province in India (55). Though Economics is his main subject, English is “one of [his] best subjects,” as he puts it (59). On the other hand, Nyawira “had gone to Eldares University, graduating with a degree in English, history, and theatre arts” (63, 64).

How the Non-Conformist Intellectual Translates His Ideas into Reality

As an intellectual with the required level of education, Kamiti does engage in some form of human activity which marks him out as a non-conformist intellectual. In other words, he is able to translate his ideas into reality, through series of confrontation against the oppressive political authority.

He does encounter some disappointments earlier in life, as we have earlier hinted. On his return from India, where he schooled, he meets Wariara, a young lady from the same village as him. Attempts by both of them to become lovers did not work out. She has “a high school diploma...boosted by a secretarial course—typing, shorthand and computer literacy” (66). But she rather decides to work as a prostitute at Angel’s Corner, one of the hotels at the Ruler’s Plaza (70). This does not deter Kamiti. He still goes ahead with his resolve to get a job and live as a respectable man. In the words of the narrator, “two incidents, the encounter with Wariara and then with death, were what made him desperate to get a job...” (71). It is this decision, to use his certificates and all he had, that pitches him against the state.

Initially, his search for a job lands him at Tajirika’s firm as we hinted earlier. Here, he gets humiliated by “the boss.” He decides to go into begging as an occupation because, as it seems, that is the only option left for him after he fails to get a job at Eldares Modern Construction. Though begging may seem to be a wrong-headed choice to make, he has no other choice. At first he rejects the option of begging because it will take him to a place like “the Ruler’s Plaza, where he had seen Wariara” as a prostitute, in company of some white “lover” (71). He had some ideas to translate into reality. And so, “procrastination was not an option” (71). He is also aware that “there is a foulness inundating our society, and if we do not do something about it we shall all drown in it” (265). To him, the corrupt officials in Aburiria must be challenged so that certain changes can be made in the political machinery of the society.

Corrupt officials have been in charge of affairs in Ngugi's Aburiria for so many years. They are, of course, in control of the funds of the state, and lands. And they go ahead to use this fund in some corrupt ways. One of such ways, in the novel, is the plan to build a "Heavenscrape or simply Marching to Heaven" for the Ruler so that he can be the only recipient of God's advice (15). Since the power structure in Aburiria cannot finance some of the projects they embark on, like the building of Marching to Heaven, they resort to sourcing the funds from foreign financial institutions, like Global Bank. Kamiti plays a major role, as a beggar, in disrupting the dinner party hosted by Machokali and other members of his committee for the delegation from the Global Bank (72). Working with other beggars (albeit unknowingly, at first) he succeeds in diverting the attention of the visiting mission from the Global Bank to other serious issues that require the urgent attention of the civilian junta. These issues include high rate of unemployment and poverty in the land. According to Ngugi, foreign journalists know that no one will believe any news from Africa if the news item is without pictures of "people dying from wretched poverty, famine, or ethnic warfare" (74).

Even as Aburiria is riddled with "pictures of people dying from wretched poverty, famine, or ethnic warfare," the corrupt government officials have always tried to prevent the outside world from seeing such pitiful scenes. In fact, Kamiti's decision to be a beggar automatically makes him an enemy of the state. This is because the authorities would want the outside world to believe that all is well in Aburiria, that there is enough employment opportunities, especially for well-educated people like Kamiti. To the power structure, "the image of a country at peace was crucial for wooing finance for Marching to Heaven" (73). Kamiti spoils the day for the authorities when he joined other beggars in shouting that "Marching to Heaven Is Marching to Hell... [Global Bank's] Strings of Loans Are Chains of Slavery [on the arms, feet and necks of Aburirians]" (74).

Similarly, Kamiti's decision to set up the shrine of the wizard of the crow becomes another way of confronting the forces that are against the developmental aspirations of Aburiria as a state in search of full nationhood. It is the effect of his activities as a wizard that agitated the corrupt political class more. His setting up of the shrine of the wizard of the crow makes the corrupt government officials jittery. The police constable, Arigaigai Gatherer, who continues to chase Kamiti and Nyawira until they "ran right through the village to the outskirts of Santalucia, the vast prairie surrounding all of Eldares" (75,76) becomes afraid and decides to go back when he discovers that he is now within the territory of the wizard of the crow. He (Gatherer) is not the only one that is afraid of the wizard. Other members of the Ruler's cabinet express this fear of the wizard too. This part of Ngugi's "tale" may seem funny, but it is Kamiti's decision to play the wizard that marks the watershed in his life and the

struggle against the oppressive political class. He discovers later that he possesses some powers as a healer. He comes from a lineage that “nearly all were healers” (294). His grandfather “lived with fighters in the mountains... settling conflicts [and] leading units into battle...” (294). And following in his grandfather’s footsteps, he becomes a healer of the body and soul.

Kamiti, the wizard of the crow, finally makes the choice of being on the side of the people. He decides to translate his ideas into reality, instead of watching the neo-colonial leaders of Aburiria as they rape the poor African state. He could not have made a better choice for, as the writer puts it, politics is about “choosing sides in the struggle for power” (87). The fight he starts as a beggar and later as a healer of the people’s mind and soul eventually snowballs into a revolutionary campaign by the masses against the Ruler’s “government.” The masses of Aburiria become stronger in their resolve to challenge the power structure since it is Kamiti, a non-conformist intellectual that is now their leader. They have become more enlightened in their organized onslaught against the despotic regime of the Ruler of Aburiria. With the help of Nyawira, his fiancée, Kamiti organizes the people in such a way that “even...the armored cars” sent to dislodge them and stop them from disrupting a rally, “the so-called people’s Assembly” (639) organized by the Ruler, could not succeed. With the help of Kamiti and Nyawira the masses now understand that “we want our voice back” (645).

Through persistent protests by the masses, led by Kamiti, the Ruler relinquishes power to another ruler. The wasteful venture called building of Marching to Heaven is stopped by the new ruler and a modest “modern coliseum” is constructed on the site once earmarked for Marching to Heaven (754). In the end, Kamiti is able to translate his ideas into reality. And the result is that the tyrannical Ruler’s hold on the entire nation is weakened and he is eventually forced to relinquish power.

Ngugi’s Vision of the Society in Relation to His Ideas of the African Intellectual

Ngugi holds the view that an African intellectual should be able to “align...with the struggle of the African masses for a meaningful national ideal.” (*Homecoming* 50) He strongly believes that “the African writer can help in articulating the feelings behind this struggle.” (*Homecoming* 50) His *Wizard of the Crow* implies, as we have hinted earlier, that the African intellectual needs to realize that it has always been the historical responsibility of the intellectual to start a revolution. Therefore, an intellectual’s task is akin to that of revolutionaries. The intellectual is to “strive for a form of social organization that will free the manacled spirit and energy of our people.” (*Homecoming* 50) The intellectual is to work for the conscientization of the poor masses. They need to be organized in such a way that will make them realize that their right to even exist is being trampled upon. The

ordinary man must be made to understand that he has dignity. Ngugi expects the intellectual to take the lead in the struggle for the emancipation of the poor masses in his society.

Ngugi expects the intellectual to use his training to work for the entrenchment of a classless society. He uses Nyawira to achieve this as “the chairperson of the Central Working Committee of the Movement for the Voice of the People’s Resistance” (758). She organizes the people through her “call for a general strike and the day for the rebirth of the nation” (669). She took seriously her duty of “gathering information on Marching to Heaven” (200). She also supports Kamiti, the healer, in the task of re-awakening the people’s consciousness. She does well, as the one “charged with gathering anything and everything about the government’s plans...” (200) and the information she supplies, of course, helps Kamiti in organizing the masses against the power structure. In the case of Kamiti, as we have earlier hinted, he is able to transform himself into “a people’s seer” (266) instead of an ordinary diviner. His aim is to join forces with the African masses for a meaningful national ideal.

Ngugi understands that “nature is the source of all cures” (267). This explains why his call for “a return to the forest” which appears in *Petals of Blood* (344) becomes a reality in *Wizard of the Crow* through characters like Kamiti and Nyawira. The picture Ngugi paints suggests that it is when the African intellectual realizes the importance of the traditional way of life that we can fully achieve nationhood in Africa. This is the reason why Kamiti acts as the rallying point for the people, as the wizard of the crow. He frees the people from the prison of both mind and body so that “wherever authority brandished its fearsome might” (199) freedom is made to take root. The call for a return to the forests, which involves fighting for what rightly belongs to the people, can only be successful when intellectuals who are knowledgeable in African traditional ways take the lead.

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