

Intertextuality in Selected Novels of Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o

Addisu Hailu Abebe, Melakneh Mengistu

Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Email address:

sidahailu@gmail.com (A. H. Abebe), Mmdoc2015@gmail.com (M. Mengistu)

To cite this article:

Addisu Hailu Abebe, Melakneh Mengistu. Intertextuality in Selected Novels of Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o. *International Journal of Language and Linguistics*. Vol. 10, No. 2, 2022, pp. 67-76. doi: 10.11648/j.ijll.20221002.12

Received: January 14, 2022; **Accepted:** February 7, 2022; **Published:** March 3, 2022

Abstract: Postcolonial African fiction has been successful in resisting colonialism and its dehumanizing ideas, which have caused unfathomable physical pain and psychological crises for Africans. While fighting back against the injustices, African writers played a catalyzing role in dismantling the system by creating intertextual connections with different texts from near and beyond. The main objective of this paper is to determine the use of intertexts in selected novels by Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o. The article examines three novels from different periods: *Weep Not, Child* (1964), *Petals of Blood* (1977), and *Wizard of the Crow* (2006). The novels are selected purposively, considering the significant contexts of each of the texts. The contexts include the anti-colonial struggles of the early 1960s, the post-independence disillusionment period, and contemporary neocolonialism. The study relies on the notions of intertextuality propagated by Mikhail Bakhtin and Julia Kristeva, for these scholars focus on the connection between text and context. After a close reading of the novels, the study identifies intertexts such as quotations, references, citations, and allusions inserted either to reinforce or criticize the meaning under different local and global contexts. Then, through the textual analysis method, the article determines the significant impact of the inserted texts in the novels. Finally, the analysis demonstrates that the intertexts are used aesthetically to criticize monologic narratives, resist post-independence corrupt political systems, and confront the danger of neocolonialism. Furthermore, the article suggests that studies of the intertextuality of novels across periods depict the predicaments of different times and the role of the elites in raising the consciousness of the masses to respond to these predicaments accordingly.

Keywords: Intertextuality, Intertexts, Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o, Mikhail Bakhtin, Julia Kristeva

1. Introduction

1.1. The Concept of Intertextuality

Intertextuality is a concept as old as the text itself. In classical times, it was disguised as mimesis or imitation which has been dominant in poetic criticism. Literary critics from various literary periods have advanced critical perspectives that are more related to the modern concept of intertextuality. According to Mario Alfaro [2], there are scholars who left their imprint on the development of intertextuality theory from Plato, Aristotle, Horace, and Longinus to Bakhtin, Kristeva, and other twentieth-century theorists like Genette, Barthes, Derrida, and Riffaterre. In academia, the concept of intertextuality being rewritten, modified, and so on is as old as literature itself, peaking in the second half of the twentieth century [2].

In its modern sense, the term intertextuality is mostly associated with Julia Kristeva, who claims that all texts

invoke and rework other texts in a rich and ever-evolving cultural mosaic [14]. Kristeva defines intertextuality as, "...a permutation of texts, intertextuality in the space of a given text, in which several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another" [14].

Intertextuality, according to Brenda Marshall [17], is a coexisting reality of "the multiple writings cultural, literary, historical, and psychological that come together at any moment in a particular text" [17]. In the same way, Vincent Leitch [15] describes intertextuality as: "The resident earlier texts open out the present text to an uncontrollable play of historical predecessors. The predecessor-texts themselves operate intertextually, meaning that no first, pure, or original text ever can or did rule over" [15]. According to both scholars, intertextuality is the arrangement of texts from previously existing texts in order to create meaning.

As a result, the interpretations of the chosen novels are based on the concept of intertextuality, in which an author incorporates other texts/utterances into his/her text either

implicitly or explicitly. Intertextuality in the context of this study could be understood as the harmonious coexistence of various texts.

Before concluding this section, it is necessary to provide an overview of the vocabulary that will be used throughout this study. Different scholars use the term intertext (related to intertextuality) to refer to those texts that the author inserts into the main text. For example, Erin Moure [23] defines intertext as: "inter-text. Using and repeating my own and others' earlier texts. Pulling the old poems thru the new, making the old lines a thread thru the eye of the words I am sewing." [23]. It all comes down to incorporating other texts into the new destination and creating a cohesive text.

With the preceding explanation in mind, this study found Heinrich Plett's explanation of intertext/s to be more appropriate and worthy of borrowing. Plett [23] discusses what distinguishes the intertext from the text and vice versa. According to him, an intertext is a text that is inserted in between other texts that have distinguishable structures such as a beginning, middle, and end. Heinrich Plett [23] expands as follows:

All intertexts are texts - that is what the latter half of the term suggests. Yet the reversal of this equation does not automatically imply that all texts are intertexts. In such a case, text and intertext would be identical and there would be no need for a distinguishing 'inter'. A text may be regarded as an autonomous sign structure, delimited and coherent. Its boundaries are indicated by its beginning, middle, and end, its coherence by the deliberately interrelated conjunction of its constituents. An intertext, on the other hand, is characterized by attributes that exceed it. It is not delimited, but de-limited, for its constituents refer to constituents of one or several other texts. Therefore it has a twofold coherence: an *intratextual* one which guarantees the immanent integrity of the text, and an *intertextual* one which creates structural relations between itself and other texts [23].

It is important to note from the preceding quotation that all alien texts inserted through the formal method of borrowing could be regarded as intertexts.

This theory of textual relation helped African writers to create intertextual relations with diverse texts to deal with contemporary issues of the continent. According to Solomon Iyassere [10], African writers create an intertextual connection to their indigenous oral traditions. He claims that the writer's endeavor in elevating the consciousness of the people could not be realized without an intertextual connection to the indigenous oral tradition. Iyassere [10] contends, "... the modern African writer is to his indigenous oral tradition as a snail is to its shell. Even in a foreign habitat, a snail never leaves its shell behind" [10].

Literature could not flourish in a 'vacuum' Ayo Kehinde says; rather, it is produced within a society in oral or written form whether that society is literate or illiterate [12]. Kehinde [12] further elaborates the fact that a number of African writers depend on their environment and previous writers for intertextual dialogue. He argues intertextuality is a well-

established practice in the works of contemporary African writers. The writers could not be free from the influence of their 'ancestors'. He argues:

Literature does not evolve within a vacuum. It depends on the socio-political realities of its enabling milieu and the precursor texts (oral/written) for its impetus... African writers also depend on earlier texts for their themes and styles. This is quite pertinent in this era of multiculturalism and globalization [12].

Kehinde believes that African writers engage in dialogue with previous fellow writers—their forefathers—as T. S. Eliot [8] puts it: "No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone" [8]. Again, according to Odege [22], intertextuality is a universal practice from which African writers cannot escape. He claims:

"African authors may be relatively latecomers to the literary scene, but they are not alone in the making of emulation of each other's works as their compositional pattern; as theorists of influence have long made known, intertextuality is a universally accepted practice" [22].

Odege believes that, despite being latecomers to writing practice, African writers have been able to elevate their creativity through intertextual connections with fellow African writers and beyond.

This study is entirely based on Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o's selected novels, with the goal of determining the quotations, references, citations, and allusions the author used as a textual strategy to reinforce the meaning or criticize against under different local and global contexts. *Weep Not, Child* [24], *Petals of Blood* [25], and *Wizard of the Crow* [26] are the selected novels. The selection of the novels emphasizes the respective socio-political and historical contexts while analyzing the intertexts incorporated. Kristeva's conceptualization of the 'vertical axis', which emphasizes the importance of text and context, is very crucial. The literary text as a mediator always points to the significance of the context in which a particular text is written. In African literature, this context is historical, political, and cultural.

Through various intertexts, Ngũgĩ depicts anti-colonial, post-independence, and neocolonial socio-political and economic experiences in the novels selected. Furthermore, references to literary and non-literary texts to describe the overall experience elicit a variety of intertextual dialogues.

Specifically speaking the purpose of this study is to show how Ngũgĩ used intertexts as opposition to the colonialist ideological representation of the colonized subjects. The author also employs several intertexts to resist the corrupt political and economic maladies of the post-independence African elites and the prospects of neocolonialism. It does so through an intertextual relationship with texts such as oral/historical narratives, ideologies, literary texts, and scriptures.

1.2. Mikhail Bakhtin and Julia Kristeva

The synchronized explanation about the concept of intertextuality by Bakhtin and Kristeva provides a broader chance to approach the different intertexts in the selected

novels with a defined conceptual framework, resulting in the desired outcome of the article.

Mikhail Bakhtin used the terms *dialogism* and *utterance* to describe two related notions. The dialogue or coexistence of several utterances in a particular text is referred to as dialogism. Utterance, on the other hand, refers to any text, from a single word to a larger text. Bakhtin, in contrast to Saussure's abstraction of the linguistic *sign*, understands the "utterance" as crucial to the meaning of any text. The utterance differs from the sign that it has a social context and a human element [5].

Bakhtin considers dialogism to be a core component of language, rather than just one facet of it. He distinguishes two types of utterances/discourses: monologic and dialogic. According to Bakhtin [5], all languages are dialogic, locked between the opposing forces of monologic and dialogic utterance. In Bakhtin's opinion, a text or an utterance is monological when it imposes a singular perspective on the text and expresses a single and dominant voice; dialogic utterance/text, on the other hand, is a text with numerous voices, different views, and multiple viewpoints [5]. In Bakhtin's explanation, these concepts (dialogic and monologic) correspond to more ideological perspectives.

Further, Bakhtin proposes a term which is called polyphony to refer to the coexistence of multiple voices (viewpoints) dialogically in a novel. Bakhtin uses polyphony to refer to the plurality of voices, multiplicity of independent, unblended voices and minds in literature [16].

For Bakhtin, the voice is thus a perspective, a point of view established by social and literary contexts that are common in any text. In general, Bakhtin maintains that meaning is created through the interplay of utterances/texts. The word does not have a single meaning in and of itself; rather, it is influenced by diverse contexts such as geographic, historical, social, literary, and others. These contexts consequently shape the meaning of the word, leading it to necessarily maintain a constant dialogue with these contexts, allowing for a multitude of interpretations to flourish.

Further, the carnivalesque discourse explained by Bakhtin is another key concept that gives the insight to examine the discourses in the selected novels. Bakhtin argues, the literary text especially the novel resembles the carnival celebrations on the street where the state authorities and the social institutions are mocked and ridiculed [4].

In the Middle Ages and Renaissance Europe, carnival played a vital role in revealing the social structure that existed for a long period between people stratified in classes. Pam Morris [20] describes the carnivalesque images as "the manner in which ancient traditions of the carnival act as a centrifugal force promoting 'unofficial' dimensions of society and human life and does so through a profane language and drama of 'the lower bodily stratum'" [20]. These carnivalesque images downgrade the official and dominant discourse, especially the political and the religious ones, in favour of the unofficial and the suppressed ones. The analogy of the text as an open carnival implies that a text

does not stand on its own, rather echoes other texts and is governed by the social organizations of the participants.

Julia Kristeva, on the other hand, uses Bakhtin's concepts of dialogism, carnival, and ambivalence to develop the theory of intertextuality. Under the umbrella term "intertextuality," Kristeva incorporates the term "dialogism." Then she preferred the term "word" over Bakhtin's "utterance." Bakhtin employs the term utterance to describe the aspects of implicit dialogic discourse, which highlights numerous discourses as well as their contexts. Kristeva defines the term as "an intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings: the writer, the addressee (or the character), and the contemporary or earlier cultural context" [19].

Expanding Bakhtin's two dimensions of an utterance, Kristeva places it in three dimensions. The writing subject, the addressee, and the external texts are the three dimensions of this textual space [19]. The status of the word is defined horizontally between the writing subject and the addressee, and vertically between the addressee and external texts, or an "anterior or synchronic literary corpus" [19]. Thus, Kristeva imagines the intersection of the horizontal and vertical axes as: "horizontal axis (subject-addressee) and vertical axis (text-context) coincide, bringing to light an important fact: each word (text) is an intersection of word (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read" [13].

In short, both scholars argue that utterances/words have social context and a human element. However, in contrast to Bakhtin Kristeva sees the 'word' as a combination of texts, rather than a combination of voices or perspectives.

1.3. Kristeva's Notion of Significance

Significance refers to "the heterogeneous articulation of semiotic and symbolic dispositions [which] enables a text to signify what representative and communicative speech does not say" [14]. For Kristeva, "biological forces are socially controlled, directed and organized, producing an excess with regard to social apparatuses" [14]. This "instinctual operation" becomes "a practice [and] a transformation" when it enters into the code of linguistic and social communication" [14].

In *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Kristeva refers to signifying practices in "the arts, religion and rites" which "underscore the limits of socially useful discourse and attest to what it represses the process that exceeds the subject and his communicative structures" [14]. Kristeva refers to this kind of signifying practice as *significance*, in itself an ambivalent term which suggests both a fixed signification and the process that produces and exceeds it, "the constant work of drives towards, in and through language" [14]. In simple language, Noelle McAfee (2004) explains *significance* as, "the ways in which bodily drives and energy are expressed, literally discharged through our use of language, and how our signifying practices shape our subjectivity and experience" [18].

The semiotic and symbolic, according to Kristeva, are two interrelated components of language. Semiotic is the

matriarchal part of the language that reveals the speaker's inner urges and impulses. Characters' tone, rhythmical sentences, and pictures used to describe what they intend to convey are all manifestations of these unconscious desires. Symbolic, on the other hand, is the patriarchal part of language which suppresses the semiotic aspect. To put it another way, "the social is always oppressive in Kristevan scheme" [11].

Simply put the symbolic represents the rational, the logical, non-emotive, and the part that can be understood completely. It represents the point at which the subject enters into society and is subjected to social structures, including linguistic structures [14]. The semiotic, on the other hand, is the irrational, the illogical, the desires and drives of the subject [14].

2. Analysis and Interpretation

In this section, a brief discussion of the most recurrent intertexts and their usage in diverse contexts are explored. The intertexts are presented by comparing and contrasting to determine Ngũgĩ's intention in employing the intertexts. The section also highlights the significant role the intertexts in substantiating the themes of resistance against oppression and representations are discussed. Emphasis is given to selected topics from each of the novels and analyzed that deal with resistance and representations under those different local and global contexts.

2.1. *Inter-generational Dialogue and Disruptions of Traditions*

Weep Not, Child unveils the dialogue between generations through allusions and references to history. The superstitious older generation laments the lost land, and the current generation criticizes the superstition. The dialogue between generations seems rival and full of disrespect, causing a societal divide. The crack casts its shadow on the effectiveness of the struggle against colonialism, as Ngũgĩ narrates in the novel. The major intertexts incorporated into this sub-topic are the ambivalence towards Kenya's glorious and gloomy history and the issues of landlessness.

Land, the monumental metaphor of wealth and a connector to the spirit of the ancestors, used to be the symbol of the Kenyan people's glorious past. But that symbol seems now to be in ruin. Land ownership became a story about yesterday, whose restoration is only attainable via struggle. This situation directly created a sense of a blame game between generations.

Boro occasionally laments the predecessors' failure to preserve the God-given land. When he returned from World War II, he remained landless and jobless. Boro claims that this generation is alienated from the land because of the weakness of people like Ngotho—a metaphor of the superstitious ancestors. Boro is always upset and says, "...it was through the stupidity of our fathers that the land had been taken" [24].

Boro could also be interpreted as a symbol for the younger

generation. This generation believes that the ancestors showed weakness when the white man crept into Africa. As a result, Ngũgĩ displays a rival relationship between the old and younger generations. Boro has little respect for his father, and he even expresses his disdain for him on occasions. His semiotic language use deviates from the semantic rules and social values. He feels that there are awful historical situations in Kenya—a history of surrender. The people have allowed imperialists to infiltrate the heart of the country. The language "...the stupidity of our forefathers..." is a semiotic language expressed against the semantic rules and the social values in which he was raised. Even though the custom requires him to respect the elders, he could not withhold his emotionally driven semiotic utterance. Boro believes that Kenyans would not have been landless if their ancestors had resisted the invasion of colonialism from the onset.

For his part, Ngotho is afraid of having an open conversation with Boro, except to externalize Boro's recurrent rage at the Big War. The young Kenyans considered the ancestors docile to the white people. Nevertheless, when the elderly recount stories, they frequently reveal to the children how hard they tried to fight the colonial invasion. However, they are trapped in superstitious beliefs; they have failed to protect themselves and are now waiting for the so-called prophecy to come true. Boro angrily says, "How could these people have let the white man occupy the land without acting? And what was all this superstitious belief in a prophecy?" [24].

The new generation, with more experience than the elders, is determined to mobilize society against British rule. Even though it goes against deeply ingrained cultural norms, seizing leadership from the elders makes mobilization relatively easier. This leadership role created a significant divide between the older and younger generations. The struggle could fail unless the youths challenge some traditional norms.

The involvement of Ngotho in the Mau Mau struggle seems sudden, there could be different reasons to enlist. One reason could be Boro's challenge to Ngotho's authority in giving the oath, for Ngotho has been waiting for the prophecy. So he primarily seems motivated by the loss of authority brought on by the youthful Mau Mau fighters like his son, Boro.

The narrator describes the resistance of Ngotho to take an oath from his son, for it is a symbol of disrespecting the customs.

If he and his generation had failed, he was ready to suffer for it... But whatever Ngotho had been prepared to do to redeem himself in the eyes of his children, he would not be ordered by a son to take oath (...) After all, oath-taking as a means of binding a person to a promise was a normal feature of tribal life. But to be given by a son! That would have violated against his standing as a father. A lead in that direction could only come from him, the head of the family. Not from a son; not even if he had been to many places and knew many things. That gave him no right to reverse the custom and tradition for which he and those of

his generation stood" [24].

Another reason for his sudden involvement could be his exposure to the barber's discourse about white people. The barber's story might have ignited Ngotho's strong desire to get back the land by defeating his fear of the white people. Above all, his strong desire to repossess the land that could restore everything to normal seems to drive him into the fight for freedom.

Even though Ngotho did not express his anger and sense of loss explicitly, he always feels angry while taking care of the land possessed by Mr. Howlands. He promised himself that he would take care of the land so that future generations could live in harmony. Ngotho admires the land and says, "It is the best land in all the country" [24]. Ngotho's sudden involvement in the struggle could also be attributed to his long-held sense of alienation from the ancestor's land. And before his involvement, he had promised to protect the land of his ancestors. "He owed it to the dead, the living and the unborn of his line, to keep guard over this *shamba*" [24].

However, the older generation repeatedly gets disrespected by the younger generation. The disrespect could be an immediate cause to thrust Ngotho towards supporting the Mau Mau rebel group explicitly. Furthermore, Ngotho is interested in the Mau Mau war not only because the war made him lose authority in the family but also he seemed desperate for the old ways—waiting for the prophecy to come true. He has been waiting for years for the white men to go the way they came. But he hesitated their departure after his conversation with Mr. Howlands.

'Kwa nini Bwana. Are you going back to-?'

'No,' Mr. Howlands said, unnecessarily loudly.

'...Your home, home...'

'My home is here!'

Ngotho was puzzled. Would these people never go? But had not the old Gikuyu seer said that they would eventually return the way they had come? [24].

This could be the moment of a moral dilemma for Ngotho—to wait for the prophecy or to follow the younger generation. He had been waiting for the time for the white men to leave his land so that Ngotho would finally see Boro and the other sons smile as they reconnect to the land of their ancestors. Ngotho might have thought that the smile would rekindle a new light between the old and the new generation when the land is regained. The departure of the whites would finally smooth the rough relationship between the two generations. But now, Ngotho seems tired of the interminable prophecy.

On the other hand, Boro explains the possible scars the struggle could leave among generations. He is confident the lost land will finally come back to black people. But the struggle for land has been so violent and bloody. It is violent not only because it is an armed struggle, but also because it crosses the line of power hierarchy between the two generations. He says, "The lost land will come back to us maybe. But I've lost too many of those whom I loved for land to mean much to me. It would be a cheap victory" [24]. Despite all his anger at the forefathers, he still feels guilty about some of his offensiveness against the elders. On top of

that, he sympathizes with the deaths of fellow Kenyans like Jacobo, the renegade, and others. In the process of reclaiming their lost land, black people fought each other; elders and values were disrespected, and these incidents caused a division within society.

Sometimes, it seems unavoidable to cross the rigid traditional values that do not benefit the masses. The struggle ignited by the younger generation could restore the land, despite its consequence of destroying the relationship between generations. However, reclaiming the land would unite the society through the spirits of the ancestors.

2.2. From Class Consciousness to Revolution

Lowell Edmunds (2001) refers to those larger quotations which could not usually be found verbally and on the surface like the conventional ones as system references. Edmunds (2001), states, "The term system is used here to refer to verbal categories (...) larger than single texts" [7].

Petals of Blood could be perceived as a brief summary that enlightens to the socialist socio-political and economic ideology— from class consciousness to class struggle then the revolution of the proletariat and the peasants to overthrow the exploitive capitalist system. Thus, the dialogue between Socialism and capitalism in the novel could be perceived as system references.

In Ngũgĩ's own words, the process of getting conscious of oppressions is explained as:

"I am more interested in their [the workers and the peasants] development from the stage of black cultural nationalism to the stage of class consciousness. From the when (a character) sees oppression in terms of culture alone, to the stage when he can see oppression and exploitation as being total, that is, as being economic, political, and cultural. From a stage where he can see African Societies as differentiated between the peasantry and the workers on the one hand, and imperialism and its allies on the other" [1].

In his first novel *Weep Not, Child*, Ngũgĩ is able to prepare Africans for further struggle primarily by boosting their confidence and self-esteem. He deconstructed the colonialist discourse that has reigned for many years which Africans have taken for granted.

Brendon Nicholls (2010) has observed, that the Yeatsian section headings of the novel ('*Walking ... Toward Bethlehem... To Be Born ... Again ... La Luta Continua!*') read like an abbreviated account of Christian belief, encompassing the Jewish exodus from Egypt, the birth of Christ and, the Second Coming. Moreover, Ilmorog's historical development from Ndemi na Mathathi's edenic founding of the cultural clearing to the closing passages invoking apocalyptic 'gnomic angels' reads like the biblical development from Genesis to Revelation [21]. Gail Fincham (1992) has also highlighted how Ngũgĩ uses these biblical allusions in the four sections along with oral narratives [9].

The current study contends with Nicholls's argument and hints at a perspective through which the above Yeatsian section headings of the novel could also be approached.

Thus, this study asserts the section headings could also be seen as a brief summary of a Socialist way of liberation, encompassing the class consciousness, the collective struggle of the people, and the revolution to overthrow the oppressive capitalist system. Moreover, Illmorog's historical development from a small village to a big city after the revolutionary by the masses reads like the socialist's way of achieving liberation- from class consciousness to revolution.

The sub-titles seem intentionally used to serve the thematic concern of the novel. They allude to the Bible and a motto from the anti-colonial movement called FRELIMO in Mozambique. These sub-titles sound more powerful when brought together than individually. The combined words and phrases become a complete sentence that begins with a present participle phrase and ends with a motto from Mozambique's anti-colonial fighters. The ellipses in part one (Walking...) and in part four (Again...La Luta Continua!) seem to deliberately lead readers to synthesis the words/phrases together.

Specifically speaking, the journey the Virgin Mary and Joseph made to Bethlehem is a journey that finally brings freedom and liberty to human beings to the world as a result of the birth of Jesus Christ. And the motto of FRELIMO (The Mozambique Liberation Front) is an inspiring motto to those who are stiffly resisting the oppression and the exploitation of the unjust political and economic system. As an intertextual device, the allusion to these stories is intended to tip readers to follow a certain path to arrive at the theme of resistance against oppressive ideology. Through the Biblical allusion, the author urges a socialist system of liberation that begins from class consciousness to a revolution of the exploited ones.

The Bible claims the birth of Jesus Christ from the Virgin Mary is a fulfillment of God's promise to save his people from slavery. It was prophesied in the Scripture by prophets that Jesus Christ will be born again from a woman. With human attributes, he will submit himself to be tortured and crucified by the Jews to clean human beings' sins. Then, Mary gave birth to Jesus Christ at Bethlehem. His birth marked the beginning of a new world on which people get unchained from the shackles of the devil. In short, Christ's birth is believed to liberate human beings and bring light to the world where people live in peace, love, harmony, and happiness.

Similar to the story of the birth of Christ, the major characters in *Petals of Blood* are depicted with liberating qualities. However, before enlightening the people of Illmorog to stand for freedom and equality, they had to get conscious of their own class. These characters have passed through miserable life experiences in post-independent Kenya because of the oppressive system. Munira, disrespected by his money-loving families for not making money at the cost of anything, Wanja gets raped by Kimeria, a government official with political and economic power, Abdulla got nothing after losing his one leg fighting along with the Mau Mau for independence, and the youngest of all Karega witnessed poverty as a jobless citizen.

Therefore, they wanted a place to escape from their predicaments. They coincidentally met at a small forgotten village called Illmorog. Through time, these characters recollected themselves and figured out their class and the system that kept the people in absolute poverty. Illmorog is, therefore, the place (Bethlehem) where the characters are able to get a rebirth; a reference to their awareness of the root cause of all the miseries in Kenya.

Thus, the journey of these characters to Illmorog alludes to the journey of the Virgin Mary to Bethlehem to give birth to Jesus Christ. They went to Illmorog to be born again where they would be embraced by fellow human beings. After the re-birth, they began working collectively to drive off oppression and exploitation from Illmorog. The people used to harvest with their sweat and blood and enjoy nature's bounty. But now, they fall from their grace because of poverty, drought, and famine. The corrupt political and economic capitalist system continued by the post-independence local leaders to worsen the people's life.

To put it simply, primarily the characters went to Illmorog to escape their own unsuccessful and regretful life. Later, they became the leader of the people helping to elevate the consciousness of the common people. The exodus of Illmorog people to Nairobi resembles the exodus of Israelites from Egypt to Canaan led by Moses. Like Mosses, Karega and the other characters led the people to Nairobi to expose the corrupt administration in Illmorog. Despite the transformation of Illmorog into a big city after the exodus, the change brought nothing and as usual in Africa, life got worsened than before.

The author, as a sub-title to the last part, brought FRELIMO's motto that read "*Again... La Luta Continua!*" just to mean in Portuguese "*the struggle continues!*". Illmorog people did not finally succeed; another round of struggle became inevitable until real change reigns in Kenya. Again, the new generation is expected to shoulder the struggle. Karega and Munira were detained as suspects for the killing of three officials- Mzigo, Chui, and Kimeria. Abdulla continued the destitute life as a fruit and skin seller and Wanja finally got pregnant. But Karega received a message from an unknown lady that the struggle he and his colleagues began is going well underground. The motto from the previous anti-colonial movement is utilized by Ngũgĩ to convey a similar thematic issue. Julia Kristeva categorizes such a technique of quoting another's speech without distortion of the central message as one of an ambivalent word.

2.3. *The Disruptive Carnavalesque Discourse*

Contrary to the single viewpoint by the Ruler of Aburiria, the Movement for the Voice of the People, led by Nyawira, challenges this monologic discourse in an effort to curb it. In many parts of the novel, the people's anger and opposition are expressed through songs that demand freedom:

*The people have spoken
The people have spoken
Give me back my voice*

The people have spoken

Give me back the voice you took from me [26].

No matter how horrific the response of the government, the people never get intimidated and silenced totally as the government expected them to be. They demand their freedom of speech with a song that transgresses the repressive perspective of the state. The people's plea for the return of their voice is a symbolic demand to think freely and speak even against the government as it is naturally given human right. The people rejected the ideas of the authoritarian Ruler. Protesters chant, "*Give me back the voice you took from me*" [26], and vividly describe how the dictator intimidated them to submit to his monologic discourse. He silenced them from expressing their voice (perspective) by the bullet. However, even amidst such a chaotic and horrendous setting, the people keep pushing for their human and democratic rights.

In order to set the tone and theme, the novel is furnished frequently with spiritual and worldly songs sung by the masses and the characters. This song of the people is inserted to denounce the suppressive and defiant authoritarian rule the people are tired of. In implying the pessimist atmosphere of the country, the singers compose the following verses:

"I do not sing in a house at war

My song might become a cacophony

And my voice gets lost in my throat" [26].

The above extract is a direct reference to the frightening regime and the gloomy political atmosphere in the Free Republic of Aburiria. There are regular killings, massacres, and detentions of citizens who refused to obey official rules. Aburiria is at war fought between the Ruler and the people. The Ruler has already declared war against any competing party. It is not usual to sing (speak the truth) while the authority has just promised to silence someone who dares to sing/speak. The people's song is not a kind of song to praise the Ruler. "*My song might become a cacophony*"; the personas in the song are implying any quest for free speech and change of the system is a song which is jarring to the ears of the Ruler and his cabinet members. Thus, standing against the official discourse preached by the state results in loss of life - "*And my voice gets lost in my throat*", a reference to the silencing strategy of the regime through killing or detaining. The moment people began speaking against the Ruler's corrupt system; they get either killed or treated brutally.

Ngũgĩ incorporated the discourse that counter-argues the single point of view from the state that enchained the people for many years. Nyawira leads the 'Movement for the Voice of the People' that frequently destroyed the reputation of the Ruler and his made-up narratives about his regime. On different occasions, the members of the movement publicly denounced the authoritarian Ruler and his callous administration. In one episode, the members, disguised as beggars, appeared suddenly and began denouncing the Marching to Heaven project. The voice of the masses is heard chanting against the crazy idea of the project.

...a group of beggars started shouting slogans beyond the decorum of begging. Marching to Heaven Is Marching to

Hell. Your Strings of Loans Are Chains of Slavery. Your Loans Are the Cause of Begging. We Beggars Beg the End of Begging. The March to Heaven Is Led by Dangerous Snakes. This last slogan was chanted over and over [26].

These beggars challenge the delegates of the neocolonial financial institutions that came to evaluate the feasibility of the project. Here, neocolonial powers are criticized that exacerbating the lives of ordinary Africans. These states indirectly control Africa by soaking the people into a debt in which the repayment could pass to future generations. Therefore, Ngũgĩ Wa Thiongo, is urging the neocolonial institutions such as Global Bank (a reference to World Bank) and Global Ministry of Finance (International Monetary Fund) to stop funding the killings of innocent people only for demanding their rights as human beings.

The monologic discourse of the Ruler again is embarrassed by the group of women at the launching ceremony of the Marching to Heaven Project. The project by itself is part of the magical realism that the author included to mock the crazy ideas of African leaders. It is also a symbolic representation of a monologic discourse in which the Ruler decided the construction without dialogue with the citizens of the country. In a simple explanation, the leaders in Africa are crazy and victims of a personality cult. According to Julia Kristeva, a polyphonic novel blends monologic and dialogic discourses together. Ngũgĩ is able to meet such categorization by incorporating monologic discourses and the discourse that challenges them.

The Ruler self-importantly announced the launching to build Marching to Heaven to Aburirians gathered on the scorching sun. The people would pay each penny with the interest for generations to come. His crazy idea is going to leave debts to future generations. The author mocks African leaders through such fantastic stories which could not be achieved. The leaders suffer from a personality cult. The project they plan to construct is not directed to solve societal problems rather it is directed to showing their mightiness. To persuade the delegates of the Global Bank and Global Ministry of Finance, he pledged that:

The Aburirian masses are ready to forgo clothes, houses, education, medicine, and even food in order to meet every condition the Bank may impose on the funds it releases for Marching to Heaven...We swear by the children of the children of the children of the children of our children to the end of the world- yes we swear even by the generations that may be born after the end of the world- that we shall pay back every cent of the principle along with interests and infinitum [26].

This excerpt is a reference to the leaders of most African countries. It is a mockery against African leaders. The leaders prioritize personality building over providing basic needs the people badly need. The Ruler listed the basic needs of human beings and claimed the people would give them up in order to build one of the wonders of the world. However, Aburirians are forced to share the debt to construct the project that never brings food.

Nyawira and members of the party knew the project would

bring nothing for Aburirian people; it may satisfy the ego of the Ruler. Hence, knowing the irrelevance of the project to the lives of the masses, the Movement for the Voice of the People, led by Nyawira, distracted the ceremony from women cheerleaders. Nyawira narrated the occasion to Kamiti proudly and triumphantly. She said:

“...all of us in the arena suddenly faced the people, our backs turned to the platform. All together we lifted our skirts and exposed our butts to those on the platform, and squatted as if about to shit en masse in the arena. Those of us in the crowd started swearing: MARCHING TO HEAVEN IS A PILE OF SHIT! MARCHING TO HEAVEN IS A MOUNTAIN OF SHIT! And the crowd took this up [26].

In this very formal state ceremony, showing butt in front of dignitary officials and Ministers is unofficial and a sign of resistance to a dominant perspective or ideology practiced during carnival celebration. In a carnival celebration, Bakhtin (1986) says it is usual to have unofficial kind of language use and celebrations to disobey official rules and regulations [5]. The official laws and orders are transgressed through those practices deemed to be unofficial either by the state or religious institutions. Thus, Ngũgĩ is able to bring the cheerleaders to the ceremony that represents the official and unofficial points of view. Each singer sing about contradictory perspectives, the one that supports the perspective of the Ruler and the one against this perspective.

The Movement for the Voice of the People of Aburiria is one of the major organized treats to the authoritarian regime. Every crazy idea of the Ruler is sharply criticized and harshly denounced by this opposing group. Quite different from his previous novels, Ngũgĩ Wa Thiongo created Nyawira- a very strong female character that seeks to destroy the authoritarian ideas in the country.

Nyawira is a conscious character whose background is from a good income-earning family. She is portrayed as being confident enough to reflect her own perspective on different issues without the control of the author. In this novel, the author incorporated several perspectives, a strong woman leader that mobilizes the society to bring change, and a Wizard that urges going back to the use of indigenous herbs to heal the society. The Wizard is a symbolic figure that advocates the return to indigenous wisdom could heal the society whom he believes is sick. The interventions of the local wisdom are the chief remedy for the sickness to cure.

Women are presented as a change agent in this novel than in any other previous novel by Ngũgĩ. The collective and unofficial actions of the women at the celebration of the Ruler's birthday party signifies the author's insistence on the need to include women if any change is sought to improve the lives of society. It is an insistence towards women's power in materializing political and economic change. The patriarchal domination that has been marginalizing the contribution of women is deconstructed in *Wizard of the Crow*. Nyawira explained the determination of the women at the birthday party that, “...we simply basked in the afterglow of having made it clear that not every Aburirian was happy

with incurring more debt to finance Marching to Heaven or being ruled by a heartless despot” [26]. Thus, in spite of insignificant credit to the role of women in fighting maladministration since the anti-colonial period, the women kept their influence against similar incidents.

Further, beyond humiliating the Ruler's official birthday and his Project, these women sang in unison about the oppression of women in Aburiria. Rachael, the First Lady of Aburiria got silenced for commenting on his adulterous behavior. Rachael is a metonymic figure that represents the oppression of women in the Republic. Nyawira also fights this deeply rooted gender inequality. Then, in the presence of all those people, the women raised their voice to the oppressed and voiceless women, “...You imprison a woman and you have imprisoned a nation, we sang in a song of celebration” [26]. In the novel, women are boldly portrayed standing together against patriarchal domination and the oppression of fellow women by men's counterparts.

The double oppression of Postcolonial women obviously has been the theme, especially of women writers in Africa. Ngũgĩ has shown much improvement regarding women characters in this particular novel. Nyawira is very concerned about the issues of women. She angrily calls the Ruler *beast in human form* for his tyrant personality would take him even this much- imprisoning Rachael who bore him four sons. Nyawira visualizes the fate of ordinary women in the country by looking at Rachael's life.

Rachael's fate speaks volumes: if a woman who had been at the mountaintop of power and visibility could be made to disappear, be silenced forever while alive, what about the ordinary woman worker and peasant? The condition of women in a nation is the real measure of its progress [26].

The Ruler is crazy; he thinks he could control everything, even the time. He promised to punish Rachael for expressing her opinion about the Ruler's affairs with different young women. He pledges to freeze everything on that particular day they had dinner together. He built a new mansion and let her reside inside without having any interaction with the outside world. He promised, “...he would go away to give her time to think about the implications of her allegations, and since she would need space to think, he would bring to pass what had been written in the scriptures: In My Father's House Are Many Mansions. Even for sinners” [26].

He brought the quotation from the scripture to imply that he is her only God who can do whatever he wants. He boasts he could be merciful even after she spoke against his dignity. As the Ruler is suffering from a personality cult that is usual to African leaders, he considers himself as merciful as God. He repeatedly refers to scripture just to bestow himself the attributes of God.

The Ruler ordered, “Everything in the new mansion reproduced the exact same moment” [26] that had happened during that particular night. He thought Rachael's allegation is a result of her failure to understand that he is above everything. He intended to show her how capable Ruler he is so that she could confess his capability. Then, she would be liberated in his second coming to pass mercy. Rachael is a

symbolic figure that women in postcolonial Africa are victims of oppression.

Rachael would remain thus, awaiting his second coming, and on that day when he found that she had shed all the tears for all the tomorrows of all the children she had accused him of abuse, he would take her back to restart life exactly from where it had stopped, or rather Rachael would resume her life, which had been marking time, like a cinematic frame on pause. I am your beginning and your end [26].

The author intentionally alludes to the Biblical story of Rachael whose tears brought justice from God. The Ruler foolishly thought he could pause time when he made Rachael's life absurd and meaningless. The Ruler claims her punishment to weep alone in the mansion teaches her she is nothing in the eyes of him. He stubbornly compares himself with God. He fixed a single hymn to play through the speaker so that she expects the Mighty Ruler to rescue her from this pain. The hymn is a reference to the second coming of the Lord who will rescue his lambs.

*Our Lord will come back one day
He will take us to his home above
I will then know how much he loves me
Whenever he comes back
And when he comes back
You the wicked will be left behind
Moaning your wicked deeds
Whenever our Lord comes back* [26].

The Ruler acts like God. This is the perception of most men that women without men cannot stand alone. The patriarchal world created a common understanding towards women who are believed to be nothing without men. So the Ruler wanted Rachael to admit he is the lord over everything including nature. "What were you before I made you my wife?" he asked, and answered himself, A primary school teacher. I am the past and the present you have been and I am your tomorrow take it or leave it..." [26]. He wrongly perceived his human capacity. As a result of such distorted personality, this Ruler believes that there is no difference between him and the country. And says to his wife, "Why do you go on and on about my enemies and those of the country? Is there a distinction between me and the country?" [26].

On the other hand, the author alludes to the story of Rachael from the Scripture who sheds tears on God seeking justice. A similar incident is going on between the oppressor Ruler and the oppressed Rachael who is waiting on someone to get liberated from the tyrant Ruler. Rachael, a metonymic character waits for freedom fighters like the voice of the people led by woman leader Nyawira.

3. Conclusion

Ngũgĩ resists colonial rule, post-independence regimes, and the oppression and exploitation of the masses by local dictators and neocolonial institutions. He does this by inserting contextually descriptive intertexts that endorse and criticize the topical issues.

The author narrates pre-colonial, colonial, and post-independence/neocolonial African socio-political and economic contexts as a response to the current predicaments in these novels. The author resists colonial rule and stagnant traditional values by exploiting the dialogic nature of language as postulated by Mikhail Bakhtin. Ngũgĩ chastised post-independence African elites for becoming doppelgangers of their former colonizers. In short, the author applied intertextuality to indicate alternative political, social, and economic philosophies and values for a better Africa.

Finally, in the practice of intertextuality, Ngũgĩ appears to be influenced by both local and global contexts. In the selected novels, the intertexts strengthen the resistance to oppression, exploitation, and dominance of different kinds. The intertexts' endorsement of 'resistance' implies that African woes have not been solved, but rather the crisis has evolved into new forms.

References

- [1] Africa in Struggle. (1978). Popular Voice Silenced. *Revolutionary Marxist Journal- Black Africa*. 6. 12-15. <https://www.google.com/search?q=africa-in-struggle-no+6-June+1978>.
- [2] Alfaro, M. (1996). Intertextuality: Origins and Development of the Concept. *Atlantis*, 18, (½), 268-285. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41054827>.
- [3] Allen, G. (2011). *Intertextuality*. (2nd ed). London: Routledge.
- [4] Bakhtin, M. (1984) *Rabelais and His World*. Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- [5] Bakhtin, M. (1986). *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- [6] Devers, P. & Steele, E. (Producers) & Julie Dash (Director). (2002) The Rosa Parks Story (video file). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rOIfjiuw-Dw>.
- [7] Edmunds, L. (2001). *Intertextuality and the Reading of Roman Poetry*. Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- [8] Eliot, T. S. (1982), Tradition and the Individual Talent. *Perspecta*. 19, 36-42. <http://links.jstor.org>.
- [9] Fincham, G. (1992). Orality, Literacy and Community: Conrad's "Nostromo" and Ngũgĩ's "Petals of Blood ". *The Conradian*, 17 (1), 45-71. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20874017>.
- [10] Iyasere, S. (1975). Oral Tradition in the Criticism of African Literature. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 13 (1), 107 – 119. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/159699>.
- [11] Jones, A. R. (1984). "Julia Kristeva on Femininity: The Limits of a Semiotic Politics." *Feminist Review*, 18, 56-73. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1394859>.
- [12] Kehinde, A. (2003). Intertextuality and the Contemporary African Novel. *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, 12 (3): 372-386. <http://www.njas.helsinki.fi/pdf-files/vol12num3/kehinde3.pdf>.

- [13] Kristeva, J. (1980). *Desire in Language; A semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. London: Blackwell.
- [14] Kristeva, J. (1984). *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Margaret Waller (Trans). New York: Columbia University Press.
- [15] Leitch, V. (1983). *Deconstruction Criticism: An Advanced Introduction*. London: Hutchinson.
- [16] Lunacharsky, A. (1973). *On Literature and Art*. Moscow: Progress Publishers.
- [17] Marshall, B. (1992). *Teaching the Postmodern: Fiction and Theory*. New York: Routledge.
- [18] McAfee, N. (ed). (2004). *Julia Kristeva*. New York: Routledge.
- [19] Moi, T. (ed). (1986). *The Kristeva Reader*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- [20] Moris, P. (ed). (1994). *The Bakhtin Reader. Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev and Voloshinov*. London: Arnold.
- [21] Nicholls, B. (2010). *Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Gender, and the Ethics of Postcolonial Reading*. England: ASHGATE.
- [22] Ogede, O. (2011). *Intertextuality in Contemporary Literature, Looking Inward*. London: Lexington Books.
- [23] Plett, H. F. (ed) (1991). *Intertextuality*. Berlin: Walter De Gruyter.
- [24] Wa Thiong'o, N. (1964). *Weep Not, Child*. London: HEINEMANN.
- [25] Wa Thiong'o, N. (1977). *Petals of Blood*. London: HEINEMANN.
- [26] Wa Thiong'o N. (2006). *Wizard of the Crow*. Harvill Secker.