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UNIVERSITE GASTON BERGER  
DE SAINT-LOUIS  
UFR des Lettres et Sciences Humaines  
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# Mémoire de Maîtrise

**ELITISM IN NGUGI WA THIONG'O'S**

*DEVIL ON THE CROSS*

*AND PETALS OF BLOOD*

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## *Dedication*

I dedicate this work to my late sister Yacine Diaw and to my late brother Djiby Diaw.

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## INTRODUCTION

African literature mainly deals with African problems at all the levels. African writers such as Ngugi have talked about the theme of African elitism through their works. As far as Ngugi is concerned, African elitism is like an underlying theme in all his writings. But before showing out how Ngugi portrays the African elite we think it necessary to ponder over the evolution of African literature.

For years, Africa was considered to be an uncivilised continent because of its lack of written records. Indeed, African literature was based on oral records, which is the reason of the lack of written reports. As literary works are rooted, to a large extent, in a precise setting, at a given time, literary critics tend to take into consideration the space, the time, the political, cultural, social and economic background of any work of art to better interpret it.

The study of the authors' backgrounds is necessary for a good understanding of their literary works. But it is admitted that a good study of literary productions can help one to have a good idea of their authors' backgrounds. This explains the historians' propensity to analyse the writings referring to a social and political background, located in time and space. This double link between literary productions and their backgrounds reveals the dialectic relating the two, and this is particularly true for African literature. This point can be supported by this statement of Ernest Emenyonu:




*African literature has come to mean several things to several people. To some it is a tool for the literate African's arrogation of the essence of his cultural heritage – an assertion and at times an imposition of the contents and excellence of a black culture, on a white dominated world. To others African literature means 'a new literature of the world' with its authentic and original genre, themes, and message. To a few, it is only a political document of protest against the assumptions of colonialism and imperialism as they relate to the world of the black man. To yet other people, African literature in all its ramifications represents a mere appendage to British or French literature since most of the African Writers write chiefly in English or French.<sup>1</sup>*

There are three different stages in the evolution of African literature. First, there is the pre-colonial stage or traditional Africa. At that time, African literature was mainly a literature of transmission. It was the stage of oral literature which was characterised by the records of the "griots" who would sing the glories of African noblemen such as kings and wealthy people.

Besides the traditional or pre-colonial stage of African literature, there is the colonial one. During that period, African literature was in the form of protest. African writers tried to retrace, in their works, the mistreatments which their black fellows were victims of. At this stage almost all African writers protested against the evil deeds of the colonists. In this context, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Aimé Césaire wrote *Barrel of a Pen* and *Cahier d'un Retour au Pays Natal* respectively. This literature of protest showed that Africans were fed up with the presence of the white

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<sup>1</sup> Ernest Emenyonu, *African Literature Today*, Edited by Eldred Durosini Jones, number 5: 'the Novel in Africa' (London, Heinemann, 1972), p.1



man who settled in Africa only to exploit its economic and human resources.

After this second stage of African literature, comes another one which is considered to be the third in position but very important because of its literary richness. This stage of post colonial literature has given birth to a literature of denunciation. At this stage the bulk of African literary productions is about the disastrous situation which has prevailed in Africa in the first years of independence. More than the protest, the literary productions at this stage aimed also at awakening ignorant people that is to say African masses. This sort of literature aimed at inviting the Africans to resist against black leaders who were carrying on white domination and to partake in the reconstruction of Africa which was ruined by imperialism. The theme of neo-colonial imperialism is at the centre of African post-colonial literature. It is worth noting that in the post-colonial era, the white man was replaced by black leaders but he succeeded in finding new ways of maintaining the black continent under his yoke.

To some extent, the new black leaders are nothing but pawns of the white man whose presence on the African soil was no longer bearable. However, we can note that, before leaving Africa, the colonist had succeeded in training and setting the native elite which Frantz Fanon described as: *“Sham from beginning to end... their mouths stuffed full with high sounding phrases, grand glutinous words that stick to*

*their teeth, ... these walking lies had nothing to say to their brothers...*"<sup>2</sup>

Since the pre-possessed elite have no critical say on the decisions they have taken, they too, in order to boost their ruptured egos, deny their brothers the right to voice their minds.

Still, as regards post-colonial African literature, the writings of Ngugi wa Thiong'o illustrate well this fact, mostly *Matigari*, *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross* which deal with post-independence Kenyan society. This is why a study of elitism in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross* is worthwhile. Nonetheless, we can ask the following question: where does the interest of such a topic lie? First and foremost, the interest lies in the topicality of the subject, not only as regards post-independence Kenyan society, but equally in connection with most contemporary post-colonial African countries. As a matter of fact, these two novels, despite the fact that they refer to Kenya in particular, depict situations and problems that are common to almost all post-colonial African countries. This topic also draws its interest from the fact that its choice appears as a deserved tribute paid to a great fighter in the interest of the masses, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, a man who up to now has dedicated his life and work to the struggle for the liberation of his native

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<sup>2</sup>Quoted by G.O. Onibonoje, Kole Omotoso and O.A. Lawal, *The Indigenous for National Development* (Ibadan: Onibonoje Publishers, 1976), p.160.



Kenya. And beyond Kenya, Ngugi's fight is to liberate Africa from neo-colonialism, imperialism and local corrupt powers. He is a man whose actions and writings are dedicated to the building of a society of justice, democracy, equality, and brotherhood. Before giving the outline of our analysis, we will first introduce the man, from the biographical and ideological point of view.

In the biological point of view, we will be very short because Ngugi is well known.

Ngugi was born in a peasant family in Kamirithu, Limuru, Kenya, on 5 January 1938. In *Homecoming*, he writes:

*I grew up in a small village. My father with four wives had no land. They lived as tenants-at-will on somebody else's land. Harvests were often poor. Sweetened tea with milk at any time of day was a luxury. We had one meal a day-bite in the evening. Everyday the women would go to their scruffy little strips of shamba. But they had faith and they waited.*<sup>3</sup>

After this point, it may be helpful to examine Ngugi's ideological views. Ngugi rather appears as a Marxist though he does not expressly say so in his essays *Homecoming* and *Decolonizing the Mind*. No doubt, he has been influenced by Marx and Franz Fanon; in *An Introduction to the Writings of Ngugi*, Gordon Douglas Killam writes:

*It is Marx who articulates a political and economic philosophy which will suit Ngugi's conviction about post independence*

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<sup>3</sup>Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Homecoming* (London: Heinemann, 1972), p.48.

*Kenyan development. It is Fanon who places the thinking of Marx in the African context.*<sup>4</sup>

But, above all, Ngugi displays his Marxism through his way of analysing social facts, his rejection of capitalism, his siding with the popular masses in their struggle against the international bourgeoisie and what he calls their “*local watchdogs*.”

In his study of social facts, Ngugi, exactly in the Marxist way, always starts by analysing the material basis, the economic conditions, and the social classes in presence; to put it in Marxist terms, he always goes from the material infrastructure to the ideological superstructure.

Concerning capitalism, Ngugi sees it as a system from Western countries, a system favouring the few to the detriment of the majority, a system that is the root cause of the troubles of the masses and rejects it as an enemy to Africa. So, in connection with the social conflicts opposing the “*haves*” and the “*have nots*”, the exploiters and the exploited, the elite and the masses, Ngugi’s side is that of the masses in their struggle for liberation and survival. He writes in *Homecoming*: “*I believe that African intellectuals must align themselves with the struggle of the African masses for a meaningful national idea.*”<sup>5</sup>

What logically stems from this is that the writer must take sides in the battle opposing the contending social classes. That is why Ngugi sides with the popular masses

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<sup>4</sup>G.Douglas Killam, *An Introduction to the writings of Ngugi* (London: Heinemann, 1980), p.11.

<sup>5</sup>*Homecoming*, op.cit, p.50.

against what Matigari calls “*Those-who-reap-where-they-never-sowed.*” It is in this sense that Ngugi can be considered to be somebody who assigns a social and political function to literature. Moreover, the point above shows that Ngugi is a true nationalist and to be faithful to his Gikuyu cultural identity, he openly shows his side. In his foreword to *Homecoming*, Ime Ikiddeh recalls:

*‘I am not a man of the Church. I am not even a Christian.’ Those were the stunning words with which James Ngugi opened his talk to the fifth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa in Nairobi in March 1970. He had hardly ended his address when a wiry old man visibly choking with anger leapt to the floor, and shaking his walking-stick menacingly towards the front, warned the speaker to seek immediate repentance in prayer. The old man did not forget to add as a reminder that in spite of his shameless denial and all his blasphemy, the speaker was a Christian, and the evidence was his first name. Ngugi had never given serious thought to this contradiction. Now it struck him that perhaps the old man had a point, and the name James, an unfortunate anomaly had to go.<sup>6</sup>*

This ideological portrayal of the writer may seem long, but it is important in the sense that it can help to better grasp the theme of African elitism in Ngugi’s *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*; the topic of this work which we will discuss as follows: the first part of our study will be an attempt to define the African elite and the expectations of the masses.

In the second part of our study, we will deal with the elite and their socio-political relations, basing our analysis on the links between the elite and the political power; and the

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<sup>6</sup>*Homecoming*, op.cit, foreword by Ime Ikiddeh.

elite and the masses. In the third part of our dissertation we will focus our attention on the elite's cultural identity crisis by laying the emphasis on the elite's cultural alienation and the factors of this cultural alienation. Last but not least, the fourth part of this work will be dealing with the elite's role in social conflicts opposing the bourgeoisie to the working class; in this section, we will focus on the elite's awakening task and their participation in the revolutionary movements.

## PART I: THE ELITE

The term 'elite' has always constituted a focal point in African literature which is mostly interested in social issues. Thus, we can say that there is not a unique definition of the concept on which all the writers agree. However we will try to find a definition of this concept in connection with Ngugi's writings: *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*. We will analyse it through a definition of the African elite and the expectations of the masses.

### I-1/ THE AFRICAN ELITE

As there is no consensus on the definition of the concept "elite", there is none for the African elite. Though there is not a unanimous definition of the concept of African elite, we can refer to the social hierarchy in order to locate the African elite. Therefore, a study of African elitism necessarily refers to social and political stratification or, in other words, to the elite as part of the social classes. Defining the African elite is tantamount to distinguishing those small groups of intellectuals who, thanks to some privileges, occupy very important positions in their society.

It is interesting to note that Ngugi's works and especially *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross* retrace Kenyan society in particular and Africa in general by contrasting the lowest classes with the elite.

In *Devil on the Cross*, Ngugi opposes two different classes; on the one side, he presents the peasants, the students and the workers, and on the other, he places the

exploiters and their close collaborators. This last group, even though they represent a small part of the society, is the wealthy people upon whom the destiny of the whole society depends; in a nutshell, they are the elect people. But it is good to recall that these elite members are the elect of the white imperialists as it is the case in the gathering in the cave for the competing selection of the best native robbers who would represent the colonisers. So, we can say that these African political elite are those whom Ngugi describes in *Devil on the Cross* as the “local watchdogs” of the white man.

Through his writings, Ngugi wa Thiong’o presents the African elite as a minority that received from the white man an education that conditions them and makes them amenable to suggestion without any critical reflection. Ngugi better expresses this point in *Decolonizing the Mind* by quoting this phrase from Cheikh Amidou Kane’s *Ambiguous Adventure*:

*On the black continent, one began to understand that their real power resided not at all in the cannons of the first morning but in what followed the cannons. Therefore behind the cannons was the new school. The new school had the nature of both the cannon and the magnet. From the cannon it took the efficiency of a fighting weapon. But better than the cannon it made the conquest permanent. The cannon force the body and the school fascinates the soul.<sup>7</sup>*

To buttress this idea of mental enslavement of the new African elite, Ngugi writes in *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*: “Their Universities where they give our children an education

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<sup>7</sup>*Decolonizing the Mind*, op.cit, p.9.

*to enfeeble minds, make them slaves, apes, parrots, shadows of the men and women they could have been.*"<sup>8</sup>

In this process of enslavement of their minds, the native elite without realising how much subjective the education they have received from the Western school style is, consider themselves as superior to their kinds.

The African elite can be seen as a group of individuals behind whom lurks a split personality. To some extent, the elite member feels self pride to be among the leaders of his society which is downtrodden by western imperialism. The ruling elite make every effort to maintain control over the state apparatus and government jobs are regarded as collateral for political support or at least for not opposing it. The effort of the elite to establish their hegemony over the state and society at large, thus perennial attempts have been made to restrict the freedom of the press and to incorporate such organisations as trade unions, women's professional associations into the state party system. We can say that this form of behaviour of the elite is what carries on western imperialism. This idea can be lent support by this assessment made by Wariinga: *"A song of praise begins at home. If you Kenyan men were not so scornful and oppressive, the foreigners you talk about so much would not be so contemptuous of us."*<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, p.9.

<sup>9</sup>Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Devil on the Cross*, (London: Heinemann, 1982), p.245. (All quotations in this work are from this edition).

This distinction between the elite and the masses refers to the British “divide *and rule*” system of administration for the mere reason that by considering themselves superior to their black fellows, the elite create a clear-cut separation between the masses and themselves.

It is also important to note that there is something more from that self-pride which is hidden behind the elite’s personality. Some elite members have a contemptuous feeling vis-à-vis their own training that forbade them to partake in the Mau-Mau revolution. This point can be supported by the following passage:

*Some of us who had a schooling...We tended to leave the Struggle for Uhuru to the ordinary people. We stood outside... the song I should say. But now, with independence, we have a chance to pay back...To show that we d...did not always choose to stand aside... that’s why...well...I choose transfer to this... to Ilmorog.<sup>10</sup>*

These elite members feel guilty because they did not take part in the liberation struggle. Therefore they are longing for nothing other than leading a struggle against any kind of domination over their society, as evidenced by the following passage:

*And it is this very struggle for total economic and political Liberation from imperialism, foreign domination and internal oppression which has produced African literature and which in turn is reflected by that literature.<sup>11</sup>*

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<sup>10</sup>Ngugi wa Thiong’o, *Petals of Blood*, (London: Heinemann, 1986), p.10. (All quotations in this work are from this edition).

<sup>11</sup>Ngugi wa Thiong’o, *Writers in politics*, (London: Heinemann, 1981), pp.24-25.



To another extent, we can say that the elite are composed of the most powerful elements of society. So, in any stratified society, the elite are part of the dominant class and occupy the most important positions in the social hierarchy. Thus, a study of Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross* gives way to two main definitions of the concept "elite".

First, we can say that the elite are all those who, in diverse activities, are at the top of the hierarchy and occupy privileged positions of prestige and importance. Secondly, the elite can be defined as the persons and the groups that, besides the power they possess or their influences contribute to the actions of a community, either by the decisions they take, or by the ideas, the sentiments or the emotions which they express or symbolise.

The process of organisation of the hierarchy of the African newly independent societies continues and is getting more competitive since independence with the arrival of the elite who are nothing but a creation for and by the colonial system. Such elite are characterised by an intellectual western style of training with a lower level (compared to the Western training as far as content is concerned) which will be diversified by the time. One part of these elite will value their education and, for varied reasons, will take some distance from African cultures before returning to them, to use them as struggling arms.

In both novels, *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*, the elite can be divided into two groups. In the first group, we

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have those who have replaced the white man and carry on exploiting the masses. They are those who occupy the most important positions in the state apparatus and can be seen as the holders of the political power. So, we identify this group as being the political elite.

In the second group, we have those who spared no effort in order to awake the masses. It is this group which leads the masses' struggle against oppression and exploitation.

In *Petals of Blood* the picturesque estates of the political elite are occupied by Chui, Mzigo, Kimeria, Nderi wa Riera, Ezekiel, Waweru, the Reverend Jerrod and their fellows, who are seen as malignant and vicious, hypocritical and exploiting public officers: school administrators, Church dignitaries and so on. While basking in their good life, they seek to bolster up a social order which protects their selfish comforts and regulates the multitude to perpetual poverty.

In *Devil on the Cross*, the representatives of the political elite are the thieves and robbers who are gathered in a cave for a competition. They proclaim openly their criminality and greed vis-à-vis the communal goods. They don't even need to conceal their methods and motives knowing that they have an important hold over the law keepers such as the police and the judiciary. Wangari's experience is sufficient to support this idea.

Wangari, after having been arrested for theft attempt and vagrancy, decided to co-operate with the police to find all the thieves around. But at her great surprise she found that

instead of seeing the police, whom she led to the robbers' cave, arrest these thieves, she herself is imprisoned.

As regards the depiction of the African elite through *Devil on the Cross*, we can refer to the robbers' answer to Kihaahu who has been battenning on his own class, considering that they should not attack their fellow thieves but the non-moneyed. The elite should hand together and exploit only the non-moneyed, whether as adulterers, as false educators, as business tycoons or merely as hurlers of abuse.

We find mainly four categories of moneyed elite in *Devil on the Cross*. The adulterers such as Wa Gatheeca who exposes how he makes love to the wives of his fellow robbers. Then follow the false educators, the hurlers of abuse and the business tycoons such as the old man from Ngorika who made Wariinga pregnant.

Still in the attempt of defining African elitism, it is worth noting that our focus will be directed on the power elite in a restrictive way and also to the masses for the needs of a broad analysis. The dualism elite/masses is as well present, in both novels *Petals of Blood* and *Devil On The Cross*, as the dualism exploiters and exploited, dominants and dominated, bourgeoisie and proletariat and so on. Even though it is difficult to classify the population into bourgeoisie and proletariat; it is easy to oppose city men to countrymen, state servants and peasants, elite and masses, etc. This bipolarisation (artificial and simplistic) is all the more attractive as most African countries are now subjected to a new form of dualism under the name of leaders and led in place of the

former colonisers and colonised. In fact, there is a clear shift from the dualism of the inherited sectors of colonisation to the class dualism which is a relevant aspect of the African socio-political reality. Therefore, it is obvious that the process of development is carried by the elite who manipulate the masses for their own profit. That is the case of Nderi wa Riera, the M.P for Ilmorog in *Petals of Blood*. Nderi left the Ilmorogians to their own fate after he had had them vote for his election as a representative of Ilmorog.

In *Devil on the Cross*, it is the speech of Gitutu wa Gatanguru which can buttress this point. In fact, Gitutu enriched himself from the pockets of the people by taking the land from the colonisers and subdividing it into small plots to sell it to the masses. Gitutu succeeded in occupying a good position in the government apparatus as shown in the following commentary:

*It is by rigging the local elections and bribing his way into office against equally ruthless opposition that Gitutu reaches the rich goal of chairmanship of the local housing Committee. Now he can pocket the fabulous percentages offered by foreign speculators in exchange for building contracts, and then corruptly allocate the jerry-built maisonettes that result to line his pockets even more richly. The community endures debased local administration while publicly subsidise housing is hawked on the black market.<sup>12</sup>*

Henceforth, the elite can be seen as an equivalent to the Bourgeoisie, but it is important to note that it is not only the political attitudes which characterise a bourgeoisie; there is

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<sup>12</sup>David Cook and Michael Okenimkpe, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o: An exploration of his writings*, (Oxford, James Currey: Heinemann, 1997), p.119.

also the mode of production and the fact that a bourgeoisie is only reckoned and identified within its opposition to another or several other classes. Therefore we can say that the homogeneity of what is called a bourgeoisie is comparable to the ambiguity of the term elite which we define as all the persons and groups who, with the power they possess or their influence, contribute by their decisions, their ideas, their sentiments towards the activities of a community.

To deal with the African elite, we will put the emphasis on the existence, in many societies and perhaps in most societies, of groups which, for a reason or another, consider themselves as superior to their fellows and by the way take important decisions in direction to the community.

In *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*, Ngugi presents very conspicuous contrasts between social classes, each of which is embodied by certain characters. Then, he describes post-independence Kenyan society as mainly dominated by the native elite which is, in a way or another, responsible for most social changes. In Ngugi's writings, the native elite can be divided into two antagonist groups: the moneyed elite and the non-moneyed elite.

The moneyed elite are composed of those whom Ngugi considers to be the "local watchdogs of the white man". They are those who collaborate with the white man in order to carry on neo-colonial imperialism. In other words, they are those who reap where they have never sown.

In *Devil on the Cross*, these moneyed elite are symbolised by those who received and multiplied the ten and five talents their white master gave them and the competitors at the cave whom the master of ceremony considers as full members of the International Organisation of Thieves and Robbers (I.O.T.R.) in these words:

*And now, before I sit down, I shall call upon the leader of the foreign delegation from the International Organisation of Thieves and Robbers (IOTR), whose headquarters are in New York, USA, to talk to you. I think you all know that we have already applied to become full members of IOTR. The visit of this delegation, plus the gifts and the crown they have brought us, marks the beginning of an even more fruitful period of co-operation. (DOC, p.87)*

In *Petals of Blood*, the compressor elite are embodied by the characters of Kimeria, Nderi wa Riera, Chui and the like. Kimeria is described as a conscienceless and utterly inhuman person who, like Mwaura in *Devil on the cross*, believes in the power of money which he sees as equivalent to alpha and omega, and he will not hesitate to use it in order to pursue his unquestioningly self-interests. Beside Kimeria, we can name Nderi wa Riera who is Ngugi's prototype of the new politician who, instead of seeking to reform the system, uses political office for personal ends and remembering his electorate only when an election is approaching. This point is well stated in these lines:

*Who was their MP? A heated exchange would follow. Some could not remember his name. They had heard of him during the last elections. He had visited the area to ask to be given votes. He had made several promises. He had even collected two shillings from each household in his constituency for a*

*harambee water project and a ranching scheme. But they had hardly seen him since. Nderi wa Rieraa, that was the name; somebody remembered. What was an MP? A new type of government agent? But why had he needed votes? Even such a talk would make Munira fidgety. He would ask yet other questions hoping for a conversation that would not make demands on him to choose this or that position in politics.(POB,p.18)*

In opposition to these moneyed elite, we have the non-moneyed elite who are represented in both novels?

In *Petals of Blood*, the non-moneyed elite are represented by the class of Karega, Abdulla, Munira, Wanja, the lawyer and the like. Karega is portrayed as someone who is very reluctant to oppression and willing to lead a struggle for the reconstruction of society. He is Ngugi's prototype of the authentic revolutionary figure, fertilising the soil and tracing the path to a fruitful future. So, he manifests his rejection of the middle-class values in order to warn Ilmorog peasantry about the necessity of a revolution.

*As I sold sheep skins to Watalii I asked myself, how could a whole community be taken in by a few greedy stomachs - greedy because they had eaten more than their fair share of that which was brought by the blood of the people? And they took a symbol from its original beautiful purpose... and they think they can make it serve narrow selfish ends. (POB, p.112)*

It is interesting to note that Karega, before his leading the Ilmorogians' great journey to the city to find a solution to the drought which affected the village, used to lead students' strikes in Siriana. That caused his expulsion, an experience he shares with Munira who is part of the non-moneyed elite.

In *Devil on the Cross*, the non-moneyed elite are represented by Gatuiria, Muturi, Wariinga, and the like. Mwireri wa Mukirai symbolises the nationalist elite who cannot accept the exploitation of the masses by foreigners. He suggests that exploitation should be indigenous.

Son of the rich old man of Ngorika, Gatuiria has renounced his heritage, crossed the floor and joined the forces of enlightenment in the struggle between different class interests. Among the non-moneyed elite we can name Wariinga. Though presented earlier as a miserable young girl who thinks that the only way out of her miserable condition is suicide, ends to be a key element of the workers' alliance which is sanctified: "the *holy trinity of the worker, the peasant, and the patriot.*"(DOC, p.230)

Hence, Wariinga has transformed her way of life as stated in the following passage:

*This Wariinga is not the one who used to think that there was nothing she could do except type for others, the one who used to burn her body with 'Ambi' and 'snowfire' to change the colour of her skin to please the eyes of others, to satisfy their lust for white skins; the one who used to think that there was only one way of avoiding the pitfalls of life: suicide. (DOC, p.216)*

In brief, the attempt to define the African elite can be summarised as follows: on the one hand, we can say that the African elite are all those who have replaced the white man after independence and consider themselves as superior to the masses thanks to their education and some other privileges. This elite group is typified by those we may call the



moneyed elite or the political elite. On the other hand, the African elite can be defined as those groups of individuals who, with the power they possess or their influence, contribute by their decisions, their ideas, and their sentiments to the improvement of the community's living conditions.

We have attempted to define the African elite in the above lines but it worth noting that the discussion about this concept is not exhaustive. So, as complementary arguments, we will pinpoint the expectations of the masses and the attitude of the elite vis-à-vis such expectations.

## I-2/THE EXPECTATIONS FROM THE ELITE

The troubles with Kenya's independence were accentuated by the arrest of Jomo Kenyatta in 1952 and the proclamation of a new state up to 1962. As a result of these acts, the Kenyan patriots, the freedom fighters, went to the forest and started fierce guerrilla warfare against the British colonisers for a total liberation of their country. After twelve long years of fighting, the freedom fighters obtained Kenya's Uhuru from the British on Thursday, 12 December 1963, at midnight. So, Uhuru, acquired after a hard struggle, is celebrated with great joy. But that joy did not last long.

In the days that followed Uhuru celebrations, people's enthusiasm vanished for the simple reason that they were still facing the realities of their day-to-day life which was characterised by its same hailing problems and hardships. Though Uhuru was a good thing, Kenyan people did not face the power of the British Occupation Army for the only sake of Uhuru. Of course, the new Kenyan elite who came to power had undertaken a large policy of Africanisation but this was far from enough. What people expected most was a real and positive change in their daily lives, an improvement of their living conditions in comparison with their lot under the former colonial order.

To better scan the expectations of people from the elite, let us hark back to the last chapter of *A Grain of Wheat* which retraces the process of Kenya's independence. In the last chapter of this novel, during the celebration of Uhuru, people

started asking questions about the prospects opened up by independence:

*Would the government now become stringent on those who could not pay tax? Would there be more jobs? Would there be more land? The well-to-do shopkeepers and traders and land owners discussed prospects for business; now that we have political power, would something be done about Indians?*<sup>13</sup>

But it is mostly the speech of General R, a freedom fighter that reveals the expectations of the people:

*We get Uhuru today. But what is the meaning of 'Uhuru'? Is it contained in the name of our movement: land and freedom? Let the party that now leads the country rededicate itself to all the ideals for which our people gave up their lives. The party must never betray the movement. The party must never betray Uhuru. It must never sell Kenya back to the enemy! Tomorrow we shall ask: where is the land? Where is the food? Where are the schools? Let therefore these things be done now, for we do not want another war.*<sup>14</sup>

This excerpt shows that people expected the elite to be redeemers of the African soil which had been raped by the western exploiter during the colonial time.

Indeed, Kenyan society in particular, and African people in general have fought the western administration believing that as a result they would manage to get Kenya led by the native elite, there would not be any more problems and that their fight would not be vain. Henceforth, they can hope for a better future and this mostly for their children as it is stated in the following lines:

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<sup>13</sup>Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *A Grain of Wheat* (London: Heinemann, 1975), p.167.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p.221.

*How he had trembled as the vision opened out, embracing new thoughts, new desires, new possibilities! To redeem the land: to fight so that the industries like the shoe-factory which had swallowed his sweat could belong to the people: so that his children could one day have enough to eat and to wear under adequate shelter from the rain. So that they would say in pride, my father died that I might live: this had transformed him into a slave before a boss into a man. (POB, p.136)*

In *Petals of Blood*, Ngugi often presents old Ilmorog as a golden area where everybody wishes to go back. By the way, Ngugi wa Thiong'o shows the reader how much people thought that they would regain their lost land with the reign of the new elite. More than this people expected from the African elite the restoration of the ancient African society which sustained itself by a collective will, a spirit of solidarity and a common destiny. So, Kenyan people thought that they could taste the fruits of independence. Such is, in *Petals of Blood*, the case of Abdulla who is a former freedom fighter. On the eve of independence, he was released from his detention camp, and then he started waiting for the fruits of Uhuru: *"I waited for land reforms and redistribution. I waited for a job. I waited for a statue to Kimathi as a memorial to the fallen. I waited..."* (POB, p.256)

Therefore, we can say that what the masses expect from the new political elite is the re-organisation of the land and the creation of jobs. As Abdulla waits for a job in *Petals of Blood*, Wangari, in *Devil on the Cross*, is dispossessed of her piece of land by the Kenyan Economic Progress Bank because she cannot pay back a loan of 5,000 Shillings. Despite her being a former Mau-Mau fighter, she is arrested and locked

up in a cell for three nights, and then taken to court for vagrancy while she has been looking for a job in Nairobi:

*I was taken to court this very morning, charged with intending to steal and with roaming about Nairobi without being a resident of the city, without a job, without a house and without a permit. Vagrancy or something like that, that's what they called it. But, our people think: I, Wangari, a Kenyan by birth, how can I be a vagrant in my own country? How can I be charged with vagrancy in my own country as if I were a stranger? I denied both charges: to look for work is not a crime. (DOC, p.43)*

The above examples show that the masses' expectations resulted in mere illusions in the sense that the new political elite who replaced the white man were just what some writers such as T.M. Aluko call the "*Black White Man*". To some extent, we can say that the masses' expectations were tantamount to a dream. But did their dream come true? To answer this question we need to pinpoint the attitude of the political elite.

With the victory of the Kenyan Land and Freedom Army, the British colonial administrators are replaced by the local political leaders. As people expect from them better living conditions, they have to work hard in order to satisfy the aspirations of their fellow countrymen. But the process of betterment of the masses' living conditions does not happen as people expect it. What really happens is that once elected, the new elite lose all contacts with the masses. In *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*, the elect people or the elite go to Nairobi and then no longer pay attention to their constituencies. They only come back on the eve of new

elections to gather votes. The consequence of such a political behaviour is that, on the one hand they are not informed about the problems of their constituency and on the other, their constituents know nothing about them and their mission. Thus, in *Petals of Blood*, when Munira asks Ilmorog people who their MP is, it appears that

*Some could not remember his name. They had heard of him during the last elections. He had visited the area to ask to be given votes...Nderi Wa Riera, that was the name, somebody remembered. What was an MP? A new type of government agent? But why had he needed votes? (POB, p.18)*

This situation is further illustrated by Nderi wa Riera himself when, on receiving in his office his constituent messengers who had walked to Nairobi to tell him about a terrible drought which had swooped down on their area and which he had not heard of, he shamelessly introduced himself to them and said: *"I was planning to come for a whole week or so and tour the constituency and get to know the people. I have wanted to acquaint myself with the farming problems in the area."*(POB, p.177)

As the MP for the area, Nderi normally ought to have known about those problems; but how could he? He lives far from his people, in Nairobi, and their problems do not seem to be his major concern. Indeed, after their election and settlement in Nairobi, the MPs' first care is not how to serve their constituents, but how to keep them under their thumb for the safety of their parliament seats. And to this end, they are prepared to do anything, especially occult practices.

From the idea that some great leaders were members of secret societies using witchcraft and other traditional means to keep their partisans in total submission, and given that he had been invited to join the Freemasons (a European secret society) in Nairobi, Nderi started thinking of creating an African equivalent society to impose his own authority on the central province. He then created the Kamwene Cultural Organisation (KCO) and was joined by members of the government and other important personalities. People were invited at Gatundu for a tea party which in fact turned out later to have been an oath of national betrayal conceived to enable Nderi and his political acolytes to hold sway over the country.

But why do these leaders cling to their seats? Is it only to serve the people? It seems not. Indeed, it is because there is something else.

In fact, instead of just being in people's service, the political leaders or the political elite do not miss any opportunity of pressurising them of the little money they have. Contrarily to the masses' expectations, independence has financially enslaved the masses to the elite. Therefore, the masses are subjected to various forms of exploitation from the political leaders. Nderi wa Riera has collected two shillings from each household in his constituency for a harambee water project, and later, for the tea party at Gatundu, everyone in Ilmorog has been asked to bring twelve shillings and fifty cents; though, Ilmorog people have seen

neither piped water nor anything else for that matter. In fact, these millions robbed from the masses are used for personal ends; some of them are lent to friends of KCO such as Kimeria who admits the fact: *“Some of us have even been able to borrow a little - shall we say thousands - from the money collected from this tea ceremony.”*(POB, p.153)

The other part of the money goes directly into Nderi's pocket; he uses it as a security for other bank loans, which enable him to buy shares in companies, invest in land and housing. Finally, it seems as if the representatives of the people have been elected only to run their personal affairs, forgetting the lot of their constituents; so, when the delegates of Ilmorog walkers go to meet their MP in Nairobi, they find that *“Riera had gone to Mombassa for a business inspection and on-the-spot investigations of two tourist resorts.”*(POB, p.175)

The actions of Nderi Wa Riera can be likened to those of Kihaahu Wa Gatheeca in *Devil on the Cross*, who, once elected chairman of Iciciri County Council's Housing Committee, directed all his politics on corruption and financial blackmail. To lend support to this point we can refer to the following passage:

*It happened that now and then the council would borrow money from the American-owned World Bank, or from European and Japanese Banks, to finance the construction of cheap houses for the poor. That was a source of real fact. I can remember one time when the council demolished some shanties at Ruuwa-ini. The plan was to erect a thousand houses there instead. The money was loaned to the council by an Italian bank. The company that won the tender for building*



*the houses was Italian. But, of course, it had first given me a small Back-hander of about 2,000,000 shillings. I put the money in my account and knew that the campaign money had been repaid. (DOC, pp.115-116)*

Thus we can say that these attitudes of the elite are mere confirmations of the general view according to which the elite are considered to be agents who are manufactured by the coloniser. The white colonists have prepared their local "Watchdogs" who carry on the colonial system of administration. But the fact that this system is maintained by the local elite has made matters worse because the masses become easier to delude. This naive behaviour of the masses is mainly due to the fact that they think it is no longer necessary to be suspicious. The masses consider that everything will be easier for them now that they are led by their fellow countrymen. But things will not follow this way of thinking. The political elite grab the political power to their own ends and adopt new methods and new behaviours vis-à-vis power and the masses. This idea will lead us to the second point of our analysis. In this section we will deal with the elite and their relationships.

## PART II: THE ELITE AND SOCIO-POLITICAL RELATIONSHIPS

According to the definitions of the term elite, we note that the aim of the vying elite is to affect political decisions, to strengthen their position in the hierarchy, to have a say in the moulding of policy, and as a result, to increase their share of the political pie. These objectives mostly based on class, ethnic, or ideological terms, are to alter the uses of political power. In the following sections, we will deal with the elite and the masses and subsequently carry on with the relationship between the elite and state power.

### II-1/ THE ELITE AND THE MASSES

It is worth pointing out at this stage that the relationship between the elite and the masses mirrors that which existed between the colonists and the colonised. This is understandable in the sense that the westernised African elite are “manufactured” by the Europeans, and form a class of persons, African in blood and colour, but European in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect, and on whose support Europe can rely. Their outlook, methods and instinct come from their training in the tradition of European educational institutions. That is why they share the same contempt, lack of concern, and stereotyped views about the poor masses as it is the case in European capitalist society.

The elite, belonging to different backgrounds favouring diverging positions, and often pursuing a multiplicity of interests, have to promote their separate concerns and to

protest against measures perceived as detrimental to their well-being. Consequently, they do not share a homogenous relationship vis-à-vis the masses.

The relationship between the elite and the masses can be dealt with from two different angles. On the one hand, the relationship is that between the exploiter and the exploited. In other words, it is the relation between the moneyed elite or the political elite and the masses. On the other hand, this relation can be seen as that between a redeemer and a lost people. It is the relation between the non moneyed elite and the masses in the sense that the non moneyed elite leave no stone unturned in order to awaken the masses and help them better their situation and living conditions.

In pondering over the relationships between the political elite and the masses, we can say that most of the time the two parties start their relations on good terms. But even though they start off on good terms, that entente does not last long. For, in the long run the masses discover that they are always deluded. At the beginning, the elite attract the masses by showing them much concern and help. Most of the time the elite act in this way because they need something from the masses, for example, votes as it is the case of Nderi Wa Riera in *Petals of Blood*. But the nature of such relations is mainly connected to capitalist drives because capitalism imposes its values and its ideological structure anywhere it settles. Thus the political elite, being part of this capitalist system, are strongly influenced by it; they have adopted from capitalism nothing other than egotism and individualism.

In *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*, modern Kenya, as a neo-colonial country in which capitalism is slowly but surely settling, experiences these two capitalist values: egotism and individualism. From now on the nature of the relationship between the political elite and the masses is that of the jungle. Everyone fights for his own survival and enrichment, not caring at all about other people's misery; such is the new turn taken in the relationship between the political elite and the masses. In *Devil on the Cross*, the leader of the International Organisation of Thieves and Robbers advises Kenyan competitors to take care only of themselves and forget about their fellows if they really want to succeed:

*Ignore the beautiful faces of your children, of your parents, of your brothers and sisters. Look only on the splendid face of money, and you will never, never go wrong. It's far better to drink the blood of your people and to eat their flesh than to retreat a step. (DOC, p.89)*

This quotation shows obviously that the elite instead of helping the people to overcome their disastrous conditions, which result from over exploitation and the expropriation of public resources, push the masses to accept their condition and forget about their kin. So, the elite delude the masses and make them ignorant. But to achieve their goal, the elite carry on the institutions which allowed the colonist to better dominate the African people. For instance, we can cite the missionary schools and Christianity. The Christian religion participated in the domination of the masses by their leaders in the sense that it teaches the believers to be obedient and to accept their inferiority because it is God himself who has

made them what they are. It teaches them also to be submissive saying that if somebody slaps you on the cheek, turn to him the other one.



In *Devil on the Cross*, the relation between the elite and the masses is based on exploitation and oppression. Wariinga's experience is a good illustration of that exploitation. Wariinga is among those whose dignity is robbed. She is sexually exploited by her boss for the mere reason that she had no choice as stated by this phrase: "*when a bird in flight gets tired, it will land on any tree.*" (DOC, p.33)

Thus, the political elite's concern is to deprive the masses of everything so that they will rely on them for ever. The masses will sink into deeper poverty and in a position of weakness; they will always need the elite's help to survive.

In addition to Wariinga's experience, there are the testimonies of the thieves in the cave which can shed more light on the nature of the relationship between the elite and the masses. To boast this act of depriving the masses of what they need to survive in order to better dominate them, some elite go as far as proposing that they should trap the air and sell it to them. This idea is carried in the testimony of Gitutu Wa Gatanguru and is a means of controlling peasants, workers, in a word the masses:

*Our people ponder over those ideas. When peasants, and workers became restive, and they became too powerful for our armed forces, we could simply deny them air till they knelt before us! When university students made a bit of noise, we could deny them air! When the masses complained, we could*

*deny them air! When people refused to be robbed or to have their wealth stolen, we'd simply switch off the air until they came to us with hands raised beseeching us: Please steal from us. Rob us mercilessly...* (DOC, p.107)

This irony shows that the elite would not hesitate to use any means, even lethal ones, in order to keep the masses under their domination. For that purpose, political violence and corruption are characteristics of the relationship between the elite and the masses.

Post-independence Kenyan society, as described by Ngugi in his novels *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*, rather appears as a society in which there is no democracy; not democracy in the sense of regularly disputed elections, because there are none in both novels; but democracy in the sense of the use of the national wealth to national ends, democracy in the sense of the use of public funds to meet people's needs in terms of health, education, employment, housing, transport and leisure. Instead of economic democracy and national justice, the elite care only about filling their own pockets. Consequently, they lose people's confidence and the use of violence and corruption becomes the only justification of power. This political violence and corruption aims at eliminating their political enemies and the prominent allies and defenders of the people, or at bringing them to join their own ranks: they want stability, not for the nation, but for their own power and positions so as to quietly keep on sucking the blood of the masses.

In *Petals of Blood*, chapter V, a mysterious political assassination is committed in broad daylight and the

murderers are never found: the victim, known in the novel as the lawyer, is famous all over the country for his commitment to the struggle for independence and, after that, his opposition to any form of post-independence alliance with the former colonist. He is also famous of being fiercely against any fortune built on the backs of the masses, and he always advocates an agrarian revolution. MP Nderi wa Riera sees the grievances of his constituents who have walked up to him in Nairobi not as a result of his own carelessness, but as a plot hatched up by his political enemies to get him into trouble. To him, *“the lawyer was the enemy. He was the enemy of KCO and Progress. Even if it took him ten years, Nderi would surely have the lawyer eliminated. He would ask his henchmen to open “file” for the lawyer in their minds.”* (POB, p.187)

The lawyer is a man of the people: he had welcomed, accommodated, fed and helped the walkers from Ilmorog, who had not managed to find hospitality anywhere in the various houses they had tried before coming to him; he had prevented their arrest for disturbing the public order; in short, he was the lawyer of the people. In fact, as Nderi wills it, the lawyer is found murdered later on: taken from a hotel, he had been driven a mile from the Blue Hills and had been shot and left for the hyenas to eat. With the assassination of the lawyer, it appears that political violence and corruption are not an affair of isolated individuals; they are something systematised and carried on by organised gangs specially formed to this end.

As regards the murder of the lawyer, Nderi swears to eliminate him by resorting to his KCO. Indeed, it is because of these kinds of activities that important personalities had joined KCO: at the beginning, they have resented the idea, saying to Nderi that there were still the police, the army and the courts to break any resistance from the people, but, with the murder of a great politician, even members of the government who have not shared his idea flock into the ranks of KCO.

In *Devil on the Cross*, there is an equivalent of KCO, namely, the Devil's Angels. Like KCO, it is an organised gang, a special weapon in the service of the leaders for the elimination of their enemies, their rivals, and the illustrious defenders of the masses. Among its victims, we can name Mwireri Wa Mukirai, a nationalist who, on the occasion of the gathering of the big thieves and robbers in Ilmorog, defends anti – imperialist positions, advocating: “*The theft and robbery of nationals of a given country, who steal from their own people and consume the plunder right there, in the country itself.*”(DOC, p.166)

Representatives of the international bourgeoisie and their local watchdogs who were present at the gathering are horrified by such ideas. As a result, Robin Mwaura, a member of the Devil's Angel, is given the task of killing him in a staged car accident.

Still on the subject of political corruption as a link between the elite and the masses, it is the same Robin Mwaura who, at the political trial of Wangari, Muturi, and the



student who represent respectively the peasants, the workers and the intellectual patriots, and are at the root of the uprising of the masses and the lynching of the competing robbers in Ilmorog, is a witness for the prosecution: a month later, he buys three brand-new vehicles and sets up a transport company.

In the fourth chapter of *Devil on the Cross*, Kihaahu Wa Gatheca, in his testimony, tells how he went into politics. Therefore, he reveals another aspect of political corruption: he admits that he advanced in politics by lies, bribery, and violence; he became chairman of the Iciciri Country Council's Housing Committee, which is responsible for the construction and distribution of council houses and also for the allocation of industrial and business plots to individuals or companies, a post which enabled him, according to his own terms, to rob "*millions of shillings*". Through political violence and corruption, Kenya's riches and positions of responsibility are shared among the elite. This is what really explains some of the attitudes of the elite vis-à-vis the masses.

The relationship between the elite and the masses can be summed up by the elite's over-assessment of itself and its contempt and lack of concern for the poor masses. To buttress this idea, we deem it necessary to refer to "*The Indigenous for National Development*" by G.O. Onibonoje, Kole Omotoso and O.A. Lawal to quote the following passage:

*Some elite ideas about the poor masses:*

1. *We have not made them poor and, therefore, their condition of poverty is none of our business;*

2. *They are poor because they lack intelligence, imagination, enterprise or capacity for work, or a combination of all or some of these attributes;*
3. *They cannot even be helped by any well meaning person or groups of persons because, in their ignorance, they won't even know who their friends, as opposed to their enemies, are;*
4. *They are so many that any serious initiative on the part of our governments to improve their lot would strain the resources of the state to breaking point;*
5. *They do not deserve much more than they are getting because of their low productivity;*
6. *Putting too much money in the hands of the poor, who are basically consumers, would lead to severe inflation and national economic disaster.*<sup>15</sup>

From this view of the elite about the masses, we can say without any doubt that the elite, in whatever key role they find themselves, consider the masses in the same way the natives were considered by the white colonial officials.

Still referring to the relationship between the elite and the masses, we can note the sexual exploitation of women by the elite. In both novels, *Devil on the Cross* and *Petals of Blood*, women are presented as mere toys for the wealthy men who fill elite positions. Indeed, in their daily struggle to earn their own living, be it by looking for a job or by keeping the one they have got, women are almost always crossing some elite's paths. In such cases the latter have a tendency to grasp the opportunity to submit the women to a sort of sexual blackmail. The professional abilities of women applying for a job are then always ignored by employers in favour of their physical appearance and their sexual appeal: before any thing, they will have to accept to sleep with their

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<sup>15</sup>*The Indigenous for National Development*, p.86.

prospective employer. Thus, in *Devil on the Cross*, after her training, Wariinga's experience of tramping for a job taught her that "*The Modern Love Bar and Lodging has become the main employment bureau for girls and women's thighs are the tables on which contracts are signed.*"(DOC, p.19)

In *Petals of Blood*, the attitude of Hawkins Kimeria towards Wanja is a good example of the exploitation of women by the elite. So, in the journey to Nairobi, Kimeria wants to force Wanja to bed when she only asked him for help for a sick child.

In both novels, school girls too are subjected to this sexual exploitation. In *Petals of Blood*, Wanja, when going to high school, was wooed by a rich old man, Kimeria, and her teacher of Mathematics, who loved her, wanted to submit his pupil to a sexual blackmail knowing the affair between Wanja and the rich old man but, as the girl had refused, he told everything to her parents.

Beside those who look for jobs, women who have managed to get a job too are subjected to sexual exploitation; indeed, to keep their employment, they are obliged to yield to their employers' advances. This is well stated by these words of Wanja: "*We barmaids never settle in one place sometimes you are dismissed because you refused to sleep with your boss.*"(POB, p.129)

That is the case of Wariinga, in *Devil on the Cross*, who is fired by Boss Kihara simply because she has rejected the old man's advances.

So, we can say that the relation between the moneyed elite and women in particular is one of sexual exploitation and this phrase of Wanja is a good illustration: “*You eat somebody or you are eaten. You sit on somebody or somebody sits on you.*”(POB, p.291)

In a nutshell, the relationship between the moneyed elite and the masses is characterised by over exploitation in *Devil on the Cross*, and contempt and lack of concern vis-à-vis the poor masses in *Petals of Blood*. Thus we note that the relationship between the new African political elite and the masses is similar to that which linked the white colonisers and the colonised black people.

It is interesting, before finishing with the elite's relationships, to ponder over the elite and political power.

## II-2/ THE ELITE AND POLITICAL POWER

In the previous pages of our analysis, we attempted to define the African elite as all those who have replaced the white man after colonisation and consider themselves as superior to the masses thanks to their education and some other privileges. It is also those groups of individuals who with the power they possess or their influence contribute by their decisions, their ideas and their feelings in the actions of a community. From these definitions, it appears that the elite cannot be totally distant from political power. Hence, we propose to discuss the relationship between the elite and political power.

It is worth noting that the elite is deeply involved in the political decision making process. Therefore, they adopt some positions towards this or that decision. But most of the times the elite make the decisions which best serve their interests. Hence, the relation between the elite and political power is one of self interest. The political elite take advantage of their positions of leadership and, as decision makers, loot public funds. So all along *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*, Ngugi presents post-independence Kenya as a country where the political leaders profit from their positions to fill their pockets and to cling to their post by resorting to political violence and corruption while standing useless to their poor fellow countrymen. Thus, post-independence Kenya, as pictured in *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*, rather appears as a neo-colony politically speaking. Ngugi testifies to this neo-colonial situation by revealing to the reader the

control of Kenya by international imperialist bourgeoisie through a handful of “*local watchdogs*”, who are the new African elite and the new administrators. Thus the study of the relationship between the elite and political power is equivalent to analysing Kenyan administration and the behaviour of its agents towards their responsibilities. From the point of view of administrative law, the mission of administration is to be in the service of public interest only. But, in connection with Kenya’s daily administrative reality, this rule seems to be unknown, if we consider the professional carelessness and the corruption that is gangrening the country’s administration. The professional carelessness in question here simply means that the government lets the people cope with their own lot; in this sense, it first shows itself through the elite’s tendency not to keep their promises. Thus, in *Petals of Blood*, after a newspaper has revealed the hardships undergone in Nairobi by the walkers delegated by Ilmorog people as a consequence of the drought that is ravaging their area, the city elite in the person of Nderi wa Riera, the MP of the area, have made a lot of promises: experts will be sent to the area to see how Ilmorog can be integrated into the long term plans of rural development; the projects will be accelerated so that Ilmorog and other similar areas can be self sufficient in food in case of drought. But, we later learn that “*none of the promises had yet materialized. Ilmorog was still a kind of neglected outpost of the republic.*”(POB, p.248)

Moreover, the elite give the impression not to have their hearts in their jobs. Such is the case, in *Petals of Blood*, of Mzigo, the school inspector, and Chui the headmaster of Siriana high school. For instance we note that “*Mzigo did visit the school once or twice, he would quickly wet his throat at Abdulla’s place and then would curse the road and disappear.*”(POB, p.248)

This professional carelessness sometimes takes the form of a mere break between the elite and the masses. The scandalous result of this is that the administrated do not even know the administrators; that is what happens in *Petals of Blood* where, at the announcement of the opening of the Ilmorog section of the Trans-Africa road by a Minister, peasants, feverishly preparing for the event, said: “*Why? A Minister of the government would visit Ilmorog. We had never before seen a Minister in our lives.*”(POB, p.266) And yet, this first hope to see a Minister is not fulfilled because, instead of a Minister, it is MP Nderi Wa Riera who comes with a long list of promises.

It must be said that this professional carelessness is not fortuitous, it partly finds its explanation in the fact that the elite are more concerned with leading parallel activities that yield a lot to them; in other words, the elite do not have the time to do their jobs correctly because they indulge in business. Furthermore, the post of agent of the administration is often used as a cover to better carry on business activities. In *Petals of Blood*, we read that “*Mzigo*

*came regularly, in part to inspect the school but largely to look after his shop in the new Ilmorog. Mzigo, Nderi Wa Riera, Rev. Jerrod, they all had shop buildings in Ilmorog.*"(POB, p.274)

Raymond Chui, the headmaster of Siriana high school, who has "*numerous wheat fields in the Rift valley*"(POB, p.339), is director of various companies, and co-directs, with Kimeria and Mzigo, the Theng'eta Breweries. Kimeria owns rooms he rents one hundred shillings a piece to workers and the unemployed in New Jerusalem, and in addition to his salary as an agent of the government, he earns one thousand more shillings a day by transporting sugar and equipment for the MC Millan refineries; as for Nderi wa Riera, in partnership with a West German, he is proprietor of the Utamaduni Cultural Tourist Centre at Ilmorog, a "*Smuggling of gum stones and ivory, a centre for the plunder of the country's natural and human assets*"(POB, p.334), that Godfrey, as inspector, discovers later.

The professional carelessness of the political elite, added to their indulging in business for their personal benefits, leads straight to the corruption that is affecting Kenyan administration at all its levels. So, at the level of the police, in *Petals of Blood*, Abdulla, arrested by policemen for clandestine brewing of theng'eta, buys his freedom by offering them packets of bank notes. In *Devil on the Cross*, Mwaura, the Matatu driver, deploras common facts: "*Can you believe that today a mere baby in arms is able to tuck a driving licence into its pockets on paying 500 shillings?*"(DOC, p.50)



At the level of municipalities, Munira, in *Petals of Blood*, talking about the kiosks by the road, teaches the reader that:

*A year ago there was a big scandal about them. Some county councillors and officials were allocated them... free... and then sold them for more than fifty thousand shillings to others who rent them out to women petty traders. (POB, p.282)*

But it is the public service of justice that is even more affected by corruption. In fact, Kenyan justice moves by two speeds according to whether the rich or the poor are concerned. At times it even appears as a justice in the service of the propertied against the propertiless; to put it in Marxist terms, it is a 'class justice', and that is confirmed by Kimeria's speech to the delegates of the walkers whom he has locked up in his house:

*You will not leave this place until I say so. I could lift that telephone and have you all arrested and charged with the offence of trespassing in Blue Hills. You could be remanded in custody for over six months. All we need, for the sake of a semblance of justice, is to keep on making you appear in court for mention. We are law abiding citizens. (POB, p.155)*

At the end of *Petals of Blood*, though Karega's innocence has been proved by the fact that Inspector Godfrey has managed to establish Munira's culpability concerning the death of Mzigo, Chui and Kimeria, the young trade unionist is still detained simply because he says: "I am suspected of being a communist at heart".(POB, p.344)

Through both novels, Ngugi presents the new African elite as a handful of watchdogs that are continuing the colonist system of administration; sharing the benefits with

the colonists who are in one way or another responsible for the creation of the native elite. Thus, the new African elite replace the colonists only in form because as Ngugi upholds it, the turn from colonisation to independence is tantamount to the shift from colonisation to neo-colonisation. That means that the white man leads Africa from abroad thanks to those whom Ngugi calls "*the compressor elite*". This idea is well stated in the first section of chapter four of *Devil on the Cross*.

In this section, Ngugi shows the reader how and why the colonists manufactured native elite before leaving Africa's soil. So, he reveals that through the profit they have made from the 500,000 shillings, 200,000 shillings and 100,000 shillings the white man has given to his watchdogs, he has appointed them to different responsibilities. Then, the one who has been given 100,000 shillings is hated and cursed by the white man on his coming back because he has simply buried the money waiting for the return of his white master to hand back his money. But the white master is very glad to find that the two to whom he has given 500,000 shillings and 200,000 shillings have both made a profit of 100%. As a reward, he makes of them his local representatives whereas he deprives the one who has been given 100,000 shillings of all his properties and puts him in jail. Then the white master says to the others:

*As for you, from now on I shall no longer call you slaves or servants in public. Now you are truly my friends. Why? Because even after I had given you back the keys to your country, you continued to fulfil my commandments and to protect my property, making my capital yield a higher rate of*

*profit than was the case when I myself used to carry the keys. Therefore, I shall not call you servants again. For a servant does not know the aims and thoughts of his master. But I call you my friends because you know - and I shall continue to let you know - all my plans for this country, and I shall give you some of what I acquire, so that you will have the strength and the motivation to break the skulls of those who talk about 'the masses' with any measure of seriousness. Long live peace, love and unity between me and my local representatives! What is so bad about that? You bite twice and I bite four times. We'll fool the gullible masses. Long live Stability for progress! Long live progress for profit! Long live foreigners and expatriate experts. (DOC, p.86)*

From this quotation, it is obvious that the new African elite, from the political point of view are mere elements of the former colonist.

The elite's relation with political power is mostly based on interest: be it to fill their pockets or for the sake of prestige according to the importance of their positions. For these reasons, they are ready to do anything in order to keep their place in the government apparatus. Henceforth, they make a lot of promises on the eve of elections even though they know that their promises are never respected. So, the relationship between the elite and political power is mainly for the benefit of the former colonist in the sense that, to keep their positions, the African elite must please the white man who is mostly responsible for their being on top of their society. To better understand this point, we can refer to the way the competition to choose the best robbers is organised. In this competition we note that the supervisors are white men and that they are as free as to choose one person in place of another without any trouble because they are the supreme

masters of all those who are gathering in the cave. However, it is important to note that through the allocutions of the competitors the word 'blackmail' is frequent in almost all the speeches. We can expect that the political elite who bribe people for votes are likely those who accept bribes for favours and will end up stealing the public funds. This can be supported by Gitutu's way of stealing and his access to parliament in *Devil on the Cross*. To illustrate this point we can quote this passage from *An Exploration of Ngugi's Writings*:

*It is by rigging the local elections and bribing his way into office against equally ruthless opposition that Gitutu reaches the rich goal of chairmanship of the local housing committee. Now he can pocket the fabulous percentages offered by foreign speculators in exchange for building contracts, and then corruptly allocate the jerry-built maisonettes that result to line his pockets even more richly. The community endures debased local administration while publicly subsidize housing is hawked on the black market.*<sup>16</sup>

Thus, it is noticeable that the African elite use the political power to their own ends. In fact, the elite, from the political point of view, are only aping the western type of administration. So, in almost all the former colonies, the new state is ruled over the inheritance of the colonial system, may it be the Western Church, the Western bureaucratic government, the Western education, Western capitalism and so on and so forth. The African political elite also do not hesitate to call upon the white man whom they consider and call an expert whenever they are facing administrative

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<sup>16</sup>Ngugi Wa Thiong'o: *An exploration of his writings*, op.cit, p.119.

problems. Therefore, the leading statesmen, top civil servants, university administrators do not feel embarrassed ransacking Europe and America for experts to solve problems which they would not even broach with their colleagues and subordinates who are probably in a much better position to proffer more viable solutions. This situation is mostly what emphasises the many absences of the elite from their working posts. This reminds us of the case of Nderi Wa Riera, who has gone to Mombassa at the moment when his constituents marched from Ilmorog to Nairobi in order to warn him about the serious drought which is hitting their area. To lend support to this point we can cite the following lines:

*As it was they all had to wait for Tuesday: Riera had gone to Mombassa for a business inspection and on the spot investigation of two tourist resorts which had been mentioned in a foreign newspaper as special places where even an ageing European could buy an authentic African virgin girl of fourteen or fifteen for the price of a ticket to a cheap cinema show. (POB, p.175)*

This shows that the elites have placed their personal selfish interests above the welfare of their people. Through *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*, Ngugi tells his readers how the greedy African elite are making fortunes out of human misery. And the political elite, instead of helping the masses to fight against that corruption prevailing in African politics, are protecting it. This is understandable in the sense that the corrupt elite are the law-makers and they do not make laws to curb corruption because they would, by so doing, be creating problems for themselves.

Thereafter, we note that the relationship between the elite and political power is mainly dominated by professional carelessness, self interest and corruption. This relationship is a kind of aping of the Western system of administration, which based on a minority exploiting the masses. Thus, the African elite adopt the same ideas about dress, social etiquette, charity work, political matters, and private manners and so on, as do their alter-egos from whom they have copied their style of living. This style of living has a great influence on the elite's cultural identity which we are going to tackle as the third part of our analysis.

### PART III: THE ELITE'S CULTURAL IDENTITY CRISIS

In *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*, Ngugi presents the new Kenyan leaders as an aping group not only in their way of administration but mainly in their way of living. So, from the cultural point of view, we note that most of the elite have lost their roots in order to espouse the western culture. A great deal of them has lost their African values but there are some who even though they have adopted western ways of life, manage to keep their African cultural values. We should note that in both novels, the most poignant cultural aspects, as far as the elite's cultural identity is concerned, are the cultural alienation of the elite and the cultural identity crisis.

#### III-1/ THE ELITE'S CULTURAL ALIENATION

Before addressing specifically the elite's cultural alienation, we can say that newly independent Kenya, in the image of all the former colonies, is alienated: it has lost its roots by embracing those of the colonisers which exert on it a strong fascination. This idea is well stated by Chidi Amuta in the following lines: "*A central fact of Kenyan life today is the fierce struggle between the cultural forces representing foreign interests and those representing patriotic national interests.*"<sup>17</sup>

As the Kenyan society is culturally alienated the elite who are considered to be fruits of colonisation are likely to be the most exposed to cultural alienation. Indeed, the elite's

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<sup>17</sup> Chidi Amuta: *Fanon, Cabral, and Ngugi in The Post Colonial Study Reader*, Edited by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (London: Routledge, 1995), p.158

alienation is felt at almost all levels: customs and social ceremonies, language, names, etc.

In relation to customs and social ceremonies, Kenya, like many African new states, offers the image of a country in the hands of the elite who are fascinated by the former coloniser's ways. Such a fascination leads the elite to a cultural complex and, above all, to a tendency to blindly ape and adopt Western ways to the detriment of their own traditional African customs. Thus, in *Devil on the cross*, on the eve of the wedding ceremony of Wariinga and Gatuiria, Gatuiria's father gets invitation cards typed and distributed, this is unknown in African traditional ways in terms of wedding ceremonies. This way of organising a wedding ceremony is something copied from the Western world. Indeed, in traditional Africa, a wedding is a matter not only for two individuals or two families but for the community as a whole. So, everyone is welcome and, really, has the moral duty to attend the ceremony; these forms of cards which invite only some people, keeping others out of such a social affair, are unknown: they have entered Africa with colonisation, but, most of all, Gatuiria's father, in his cards, has gone so far as to demand a special dress for men and women and to specify the shops in which the guests can buy presents to offer the young couple. The cards read as follows:

*A Feast! A Feast!*  
**NGORIKA HEAVENLY ORCHARDS**  
*Mr and Mrs Hispaniora Greenway Ghitahy have the  
pleasure  
of inviting Mr and Mrs/ Miss/D<sup>r</sup>/Prof/the Hon.*



MP/.....  
to a tea party to welcome home their son,  
Master Gatuiria Ghitahy, and his fiancée,  
on Sunday ----- at exactly two o'clock.

Dress:

Men – Dark suits

Ladies – long dresses, hats, gloves

If you care to bring a gift, you can get one from the

Following VIP shops:

Men's and Ladies London shop, Ilmorog;

The Shop with the Parisian Look, Nairobi;

The Women of Rome VIP Shop, Nakuru.

RSVP: Mr and Mrs H.G.Ghitahy Ngorika Heavenly  
Orchards,

Private Bag,

Nakuru, Kenya, EA

Tel. HCOV 10000 000

'I Look up unto the hills from whence cometh my help'.

Psalm of David. (DOC, p.237)

In traditional Africa, it would be a sacrilege to express such demands to people expected to attend a wedding ceremony; people attended wedding ceremonies in whatever clothes they had, and brought whatever present they could have. The invitation cards as presented establish a social segregation between the rich and the poor. This buttresses how in the writings of Ngugi one can grasp the opposition of classes such as the elite and the masses. It must be underlined that the urban elite are more concerned about this cultural aperty and this is mainly due to the fact that they are in direct contact with foreign ways of living. In fact, the invitation cards show that there is no place for the needy at this wedding ceremony. As recommended in the invitation cards, the wedding ceremony is celebrated in a fashion which is uncommon to Africans. Thus, servants are in uniforms and women wear very expensive clothes, white hats and gloves.

Contrary to what used to be done in traditional Africa during such ceremonies, instead of the village women gathering to prepare the meal, there is a team of servants very well dressed for the occasion. But what is laughable in all this is that the imitation is often a blind one, not taking the local specificities into account; in such cases, even the imitated colonists inwardly laugh about this imitation; that is what happens during this wedding:

*On the outer edges stood foreign guests and tourists, dressed very lightly for a sunny day and bemusedly watching the drama unfolding before them as if they were studying the ridiculous products of their own civilizing mission.(DOC, p.247)*

Gatuiria then is right when he thinks that *“there is nothing as terrible as a people who have swallowed foreign customs whole without even chewing them, for such people become mere parrots.”(DOC, p.238)*

It is important to note that the elite become so alienated that they no longer see the beauty of their own African traditional ways of dressing. So, when Wariinga dressed in the Gikuyu way for their journey to Ngorika, for their wedding, Gatuiria is really overwhelmed by the beauty of the woman; and wherever she passes, men look back at her. But once in Ngorika, Gatuiria's father feels ashamed of the way she is dressed and later tells her: *“I would like you to take off this cloth and these necklaces and these earrings made of dry maze stalks and to put on clothes and jewellery made in France.”(DOC, p.251)*

Concerning customs and ceremonies, the cultural alienation of the elite is a reality. But the elite's cultural alienation is also noticeable in their language.

As far as language is concerned, the new Kenyan elite as presented in *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross* appear as an alienated group. Indeed, the Kenyan elite are fascinated by the colonist's language. For this reason they show a strong will to master and speak it fluently even though they do not master any of their own native languages. And mistakes in English are considered to be a sacrilege whereas mispronunciation of Gikuyu words only makes people laugh. In *Devil on the Cross*, during his testimony, Kihahu boasts about the fact that all of his children speak English like Englishmen:

*All of them speak English through the nose, exactly like people born and brought up in England. If you were to hear them speak Gikuyu or Kiswahili, you would laugh until you pissed yourself. It is so funny. They speak the two languages as if they were Italian priests newly arrived from Rome ...The children are mine, and I don't mind that they speak their national languages like Italian foreigners. (DOC, p.110)*

The most regrettable of all this is that the elite who are part of the cream of the society have accepted to give part of the most precious elements of culture: their national languages. For, as it is upheld; if culture were a house, language would be the key to enter the house. That is to show how important language is in the cultural scheme. But this is mainly the responsibility of colonisation which, for a lot, has

participated in the elite's cultural alienation. This alienation is summed up in *Decolonizing the Mind* in these words:

*Colonial alienation takes two interlinked forms: an active (or passive) distancing of oneself to the reality around; and an active (or passive) identification with that which is most external to one's environment. It starts with a deliberate disassociation of the language of conceptualisation, of thinking, of formal education, of mental development from the language of daily interaction in the home and in the community. It is like separating the mind from the body so that they are occupying two unrelated linguistic spheres in the same person. On a larger social scale it is like producing a society of bodiless heads and headless bodies.<sup>18</sup>*

To better show the elite's lack of concern for their national languages, Ngugi presents his readers how incorrectly the elite use Kenyan national languages. This attempt ironically comes from university students and teachers who are presented as people who stutter like babies when speaking their national languages but conduct fluent conversations in foreign languages. This view Ngugi has on these people who do not care about their national languages can be illustrated by Ngugi's position on the abolition of the English department:

*The oral tradition is rich and many-sided. In fact Africa is littered with oral literature. But the art did not end yesterday; it is a living tradition. Even now there are songs being sung in political rallies, in churches, in night clubs by guitarists, by accordion players, by dancers, etc.<sup>19</sup>*

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<sup>18</sup>*Decolonizing the Mind*, op.cit, p.28.

<sup>19</sup> *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, op. cit, p.440.

Among these people we can name Gaturia who is a research student in culture and who, even though he fights cultural imperialism, does not master his Gikuyu mother tongue. It is important to note that the problem of the elite's cultural alienation is almost impossible to be studied exhaustively. Nevertheless, besides the study of customs and ceremonies and language, we can delve into the phenomenon of name changing.

By now, we can say that, almost all the elite in *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross* have changed their Kenyan names in favour of western ones.

The reader notes that in both novels the elite prefer western names to the detriment of their local ones. In *Petals of Blood*, Wanjiru, Munira's wife, becomes Julia, the Reverend Kamau becomes Reverend Jerrod Brown, and Kimeria Wa Kamia Nja is now Mr Hawkins. Some of them go so far as to hate their own African names and are ready to quarrel with whoever would call them by their original names. This is the case of Kimeria who does his best to bury his Kenyan name and when Abdulla calls him out by his name Kimeria Wa Kamia Nja, when he sees him in a bar, Kimeria is taken aback because he does not like his father's name. He has used various names in various places: "At Blue Hill for instance, he was only Mr Hawkins. Who in Ilmorog could know his past?"(POB, p.317)

In *Devil on the Cross*, Kihaahu Wa Gatheeca, one of the competitors in the cave, becomes Lord Gabriel Bloodwell-

Stuart-Jones, and Gaturia's parents, on their invitation cards for the wedding of their son, called themselves Mrs Hispaniora Greenway Ghitahy.

This phenomenon of name changing brings about a kind of conflict among the members of the elite. Thence, those who stick to their Kenyan names are the victims of sarcasm; for instance, in *Devil on the Cross*, in his testimony, Ndikita makes fools of his "*Fellows, who think they are highly educated just because they have dropped their precious foreign names, call themselves Wa, Ole, Arap, or Wuodh this or that.*"(DOC, p.179)

Now, even if there are many people who take western names there remain a few who, like Kerega in *Petals of Blood*, condemn "self-hate":

*What could be more ridiculous caricature of self-hate than those of our African brothers and sisters proudly calling themselves James Phillipson, Rispa, Hottensiah, Ron Rodgerson, Richard Glucose, Charity, Honey Monsnow, Ezekiel, Shiprah, Winterbotton, all the collection of names and non-names from the western world? What more evidence of self-hate than their throwing a tea-party for family and friends to bribe them never to call them by their African names. (POB, p.125)*

All this shows the African elite's desire to part with what is culturally specific to themselves in order to embrace western values. This effect is considered to be a "cultural bomb" as it is well stated in *Decolonizing the Mind*:

*The effect of a cultural bomb is to annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. It makes them see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement and it makes them want to*

*distance themselves from that wasteland. It makes them want to identify with that which is further removed from themselves; for instance, with other peoples' languages rather than their own.*<sup>20</sup>

As stated in the above lines, the effects of the elite's cultural alienation are well developed in Ngugi's writings. This latter considers that the white man does not limit his domination on the physical aspect but he imposes his cultural domination. To illustrate this point we can quote this passage from Chidi Amuta:


*The central experience which informs his historical consciousness is the Mau-Mau armed struggle which Kenyan peasants and nationalists had revealed not only the physical violence with which colonialism sought to entrench itself but also the cultural violence which it reflected on the consciousness of the colonized. It was against this background that Ngugi may have derived the prominence which he has continued to give to the cultural aspects of the Mau-Mau struggle.*<sup>21</sup>

The discussion about the African elite's cultural alienation reveals that the new African elite have swallowed all the western values with great ease. The elite do so, mainly because they were in direct contact with Western cultural imperialism, and, indeed, they were not prepared to resist anything from the Western world. This attitude of the elite can be understood to the extent that neither education nor the other missionary institutions, such as the Church, did instil in the African elite's mind, the sense of reluctance. What stems from our study of the elite's cultural alienation is

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<sup>20</sup> *Decolonizing the Mind*, op. cit, p.3.

<sup>21</sup> *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, op.cit, p.162.



that all through *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*, the new African elite appears as a group, black in skin but white in ideas and actions. But this cultural alienation does not emerge from nowhere. In fact, it is the result of Western cultural imperialism which is taught by Western schools, the Church and the non-commitment of the African elite. To better understand the elite's cultural alienation, we will set ourselves the task of analysing the factors militating for the elite's cultural alienation.



### III-2/ THE FACTORS OF THE ELITE'S CULTURAL ALIENATION

In *Petals of Blood* as well as in *Devil on the Cross*, Ngugi presents his readers a Kenyan society which is dominated by Western cultural values. A good reader of Ngugi would easily note that the part of Kenyan society which is most affected by this plague of cultural imperialism is the new Kenyan elite who have been to Western schools. From this standpoint, we note that the Western style of education which was bestowed on Africans has its responsibility for the alienation of the African elite. Indeed, beyond any shadow of doubt, the colonial and missionary educational system consists of a series of sectarian rituals designed to condition African people to act in accordance with the dictates and wishes of the reigning hierarchy. That system of education is an unsuitable one which aims at producing people foreign to their own society and to themselves. Such is the case of Kenyan education in Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*. In both novels, the Western style of education is copied in its form and content. Those who go to Western schools are fascinated by the English culture and way of life. These people who are the African elite master Western languages and they easily adopt Western ways of life. These elite members tend to under-estimate their African values while proudly praising Western values. It is on this trend that Gaturia in *Devil on the Cross*, who is a university student, stutters like a baby when speaking his Gikuyu mother tongue without mixing it up with English words, while he speaks

English fluently and purely. That is what Ngugi explains in these lines from *Detained*:

*In some schools, corporal punishment is meted out to those caught speaking their mother tongues; fines are extorted for similar offences. Men at the top will fume in fury at fellow Africans who mispronounce English but will laugh with pride at their own inability to speak a single correct sentence in their own African languages.*<sup>22</sup>

It is worth pointing out that the Western schools have subverted the African elite by imposing on them a system of education which has nothing to do with the hopeful enquiry men pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other. In other words that system of education teaches the Africans nothing about their environment though this should be one of the most important goals of education. Instead, the education which is bestowed upon African people is one which would facilitate the colonisation of the mind and cultural imperialism.

In *Petals of Blood*, the reader learns that some Africans rebelled against that form of education. This raises a strike at Siriana where Karega has led a strike just in order to reform the system of education. Munira asks Karega the reasons for the protest he has led at Siriana and Karega answers him in these words:

*I don't really know... when the lawyer spoke, I seemed to get it... an inkling...but it eludes the mind... an idea... I mean, we were men... a communal struggle...after all; we were the school, weren't we? We imagined new horizons... new beginning... a school run on the basis of our sweat... our*

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<sup>22</sup>*Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary*, (London: Heinemann, 1981), p.59.

*collective brains, our ambitions, our fears, our hopes...the right to de fine ourselves... a new image of self...all this and more...but it was not clear... only that the phrase African populism seemed to sum it all.(POB, pp.173-174)*

Such a protest is just to show that there was nothing of that education which was meant to help African people to better cope with the difficulties of their daily life. It is needless to say that the imposed institutions and processes, such as the Western school and the Church, fail to harmonise with the particular world of the colonised man. The elite members who boasted that education, and worked as hard as they might, were always doomed to fail because the system which they accepted and kept too religiously, and were straining themselves for the much pressing results, has never possessed the capacity to fit the African context. This point is well developed in the following passage: *“Amos Wilder and Paul Tillich both agree that a religion which is imposed upon a people from above as law, is not only meaningless, but also destructive. Ngugi shares the same belief.”*<sup>23</sup>

Nevertheless, we can note that even though that system of education doesn't fit the African context, it reached its aim which was nothing other than to condition the black man and make of him someone alien to his own culture. However, it is important to notice that the elite's cultural alienation is not the result of the Western school only, but it is also the consequence of the establishment of religious institutions such as the Missionary Church.

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<sup>23</sup> *African Literature Today*.5, op. cit, p.60

As well as the Western school, the Church has its part of responsibility in the cultural alienation of the African elite. As a first act of alienating the African elite the Church starts by making Kenyan people drop their African names, considered as wild and pagan, to take up western ones. Henceforth, the Reverend Kamau changed his name to become Reverend Jerrod Brown; Kimeria also preferred to be called Mr Hawkins instead of his African name Kimeria Wa Kamia Nja which means kimeria son of Kamia Nja. In addition to name changing there is the image associated with the black colour. Indeed, in all its pictures, the Church always parallels black with evil while the white colour is always synonymous of good. As a young girl going to primary school, Wariinga notices this fact. In the Church of the Holy Rosary, Wariinga is baptised Jacintha Wariinga, and there she notices that Virgin Mary, Jesus and God's angels are white like Europeans ; and on the reverse side Satan, the Devil and his angels are black like her. In this way, the Church makes Kenyan people feel ashamed of their blackness and consider that it is cursed by God himself. As with the Western school, the Church puts forward Western values to the detriment of African realities. The Church shows off the Christian religion as one of the white man and hence to be a good believer, one has to adopt at first the Western ways of life such as bearing a Western name, and women lightening their skin with the complicity of men. From this point we note that the Church has participated actively in the elite's cultural alienation and it is well dealt with in *Homecoming* as follows:

*The coming of Christianity... set in motion a process of social changes, involving rapid disintegration of the tribal set-up and values by which people had formerly ordered their lives and their relationship to others. This was especially true of Central Province, where the church of Scotland Mission, which has a highly strict puritan tradition, could not separate the strictly Christian dogma or doctrine from the European scale of values, and European customs. The evidence that you were saved was not whether you were a believer in and follower of Christ, and accepted all men as equal: the measure of your Christian love and charity was in preserving the outer signs and symbols of a European way of life; whether you dressed as European did, whether you had acquired European good manners, like European hymns and tunes, and of course whether you had refused to have your daughter circumcised. Thus acceptance of the Christian Church meant the outright rejection of all the African customs. It meant rejection of those values and rituals that held up together: it meant adopting what in effect was a debased European middle class mode of living and behaviour.<sup>24</sup>*

If Western institutions are the main factors which militate for the elite's cultural alienation, it is nonetheless interesting to try to situate the responsibilities of Kenyan intellectuals.

Through our study of *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*, we note that in both novels, the Kenyan elite is portrayed as a group culturally alienated by the cultural imperialism which makes of them real foreigners to their own society, and distances them from their cultural roots and scale of values. In such a situation, the intellectuals normally have a role to play but what is most striking in this problem of cultural alienation is that Kenyan intellectuals also not

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<sup>24</sup>*Homecoming*, op.cit, p.32.

only keep silent but seem to sustain that cultural imperialism by not mentioning the threat it constitutes for Kenyan society.

This is well stated in *Petals of Blood*. Karega writes to the lawyer in Nairobi for books written by Kenyan black professors hoping that he will find in them a right and patriotic interpretation of Kenyan history which has been faked by imperialism. But to his great surprise, instead of giving him the answers to the questions he has been asking himself in relation to Kenyan history, the writers speak about pre-colonial times, cautiously avoiding imperialism. Thenceforth, the intellectuals' silence before social dangers of such an extent is synonymous of resignation and complicity, because in such cases, neutrality is impossible. That is what the lawyer has understood: when Karega, disappointed, sends him back his books asking him why he has sent him books which do not defend Kenya's history and values before imperialism, he writes back to him:

*You had asked me for books written by black Professors. I wanted you to judge for yourself. Educators, men of letters, intellectuals: these are only voices-not neutral, disembodied voices but belonging to bodies of persons, of groups, of interests. You, who will seek the truth about words emitted by a voice, look first for the body behind the voice. The voice merely rationalises the needs, whims, caprices, of its owner, the master. Better therefore to know the master in whose service the intellect is and you'll be able to properly evaluate the import and imagery of his utterances. You serve the people who struggle or you serve those who rob the people. In a situation of the robber and the robbed, in a situation in which the old man of the sea is sitting on Sinbad, there can be no neutral history and politics. If you would learn, look about you: choose your side. (POB, p.200)*

The responsibility of the African intellectuals for the elite's cultural alienation is located in the intellectuals' refusal to do anything against this imperialism. But we should say that the intellectuals do not attempt to arrest this cultural imperialism and they are even victims of it. Instead of alerting society about the dangers of cultural alienation, the intellectuals show to the face of the world how much they have proudly adopted western cultural values.

The elite's cultural alienation is the result of three main factors which have their effects on the elite's moulding or training. These main factors are namely Western school, the Church and the attitude of the intellectuals vis-à-vis Western imperialism. As we have discussed it above, these three main factors which entailed the elite's cultural alienation have their effects only directed to enslave the minds. In fact, it is this enslavement of the mind which can justify the settling of institutions such as Western schools and churches which were to enfeeble the elite's minds in order to make them accept white imperialism at all levels.

This aspect is better accentuated in Western schools where any teaching tending to emphasise Kenyan national identity is considered to be political propaganda, which is forbidden in schools. The national cultural identity is then sacrificed on the altar of British cultural values. The Western school distinguishes itself by its maladjustment to the national needs and aspirations of the students: instead of

telling them about themselves, their history and the values of their society, it keeps on referring to a scale of values and people foreign to them. In *Petals of Blood*, Karega, talking about their strike at Siriana high school, says: “*we wanted to be taught literature, African history for we wanted to know ourselves better. Why should ourselves be reflected in white snow flowers fluttering by on icy lakes.*” (POB, p.170)

This buttresses the point that Western school was not meant to teach people what is directly linked to them as far as their history is concerned for the reason that such a teaching would be considered as political propaganda. In *Petals of Blood*, after a circular has been sent to all schools by an English inspector of language and history at the Ministry, Munira starts demanding from his teachers the only teaching of pure facts, not propaganda about blackness, African people, because that is politics.

In a nutshell, we can say that Western schools, the Church and the resignation of the intellectuals are the elements through which Western cultural imperialism is carried on. These factors are mainly what entailed the elite’s loss of identity or their cultural alienation.

Throughout *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*, the African elite in general, as presented by Ngugi, are culturally alienated and this cultural alienation appears as the result of the perverse effects of Western education, the Church and the resignation of intellectuals. Yet, dark as it might be, this cultural representation of the Kenyan elite in particular has



its limits. And Ngugi believes in this saying: *“There is no night so long that it will not give way to the light of day.”*

In face of western imperialism, African people did not stand aside hands crossed. They waged different struggles against the white man’s domination in all its forms. Therefore, the African society has faced not only cultural imperialism but also different kinds of social conflicts. That is why we think it interesting to deal with the role of the elite in the social conflicts, for the need of a broad analysis of African elitism in *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*.

#### PART IV: THE ELITE'S ROLE IN SOCIAL CONFLICTS

Post-independence African states in general have undergone a period of agitation as depicted in *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross* through the image of the Kenyan society. Indeed the Kenyan society is marked by a whirlwind of conflicts of all sorts in which all its strata are taken. But the most implicated part of the society is the non-moneyed elite whose role is not only to guide the first steps of any possible revolution but also to partake in the revolutionary movements very actively. From now on, the most undoubted roles of the elite are probably the awakening of the masses and their participation in the revolutionary movements.

##### IV-1/ THE AWAKENING ROLE OF THE ELITE

In *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*, Ngugi presents his readers with the African elite who are divided into two main groups: those who carry on Western imperialism or the compressor elite and those who oppose it or the non-moneyed elite. However the elite is defined as the persons and the groups that, besides the power they possess or their influence, contribute to the actions of a community, either by the decisions they take or by the ideas, the sentiments or the emotions which they express or symbolise. In view of this definition, the elite have a role to contribute to the actions of a community. But it is important to note that the elite group which contributes positively and actively to the actions of the community is the non-moneyed elite.

In both novels, the non-moneyed elite have shown their help to the masses. As a first action, they are involved in the alerting of the masses in order to instil in them a sense of revolution. In *Petals of Blood*, the non-moneyed elite such as Karega, Munira, Abdulla and their likes have shown the masses that it is high time they reacted to change their condition. For instance when Ilmorog was hit by a drought, the non-moneyed elite gathered to find a way out of it. Henceforth, they have first and foremost convinced the masses to go to Nairobi and warn their authorities such as Nderi Wa Riera, the MP of the area. The non-moneyed elite define the MP's role to the masses. To illustrate this point we can quote Nyakinyua, who is a traditional leader:

*I think we should go. It is our turn to make things happen. There was a time when things happened the way we in Ilmorog wanted them to happen. We had power over the movements of our limbs. We made up our own words and sang them and we danced to them. But there came a time when this power was taken from us. We danced yes, but somebody else called out the words and the song. First the Wazungu. They would send trains here from out there. They ate our forests. What did they give us in return? Then they sent for our young men. They went on swallowing our youth. Ours is only to bear in order for the city to take. In the war against Wazungu we gave our share of blood. A sacrifice. Why? Because we wanted to be able to sing our song, and dance our words in fullness of head and stomach. But what happened? They have continued to entice our youth away what do they send us in return? Except for these two teachers here, the others would come and go. Then they send us messengers who demand twelve shillings and fifty cents for what? They send others with strange objects and they tell us that they are measuring a big road. Where is the road? They send us others who come every now and then to take taxes: others to buy our produce except when there is drought and famine. The MP also came once and made us give two Shillings each for Harambee water. Have we seen him since?*

*Aca! That is why Ilmorog must now go there and see this Ndamathia that only takes but never gives back. We must surround the city and demand back our share. We must sing our tune and dance to it. Those out there can also, for a change, dance to the actions and words of us that sweat, of us that feel the pain of bearing... But Ilmorog must go as one voice. (POB, pp.115-116)*

This long speech shows that the aim of the march to Nairobi, is not to disturb only for the sake of disturbance, but it is an action to ask for their due. So, Nyakinyua rightly deems this action necessary in the sense that they have given their participation and as the result does not follow, they have the right to stand up and fight for their rights.

It is always in this sense of alerting the masses about the necessity to raise and ask for their share that Karega asks Ilmorog people to go and see Nderi Wa Riera, the MP for the area, for it is his role to help his constituents whenever they are threatened by such a calamity. Then Karega proposes that they should set themselves the task of finding a solution to the drought even though they have their own reasons to be in Ilmorog as stated in these lines:

*It seems to me that we all have our reasons for coming to Ilmorog. But now we are here. There is a crisis facing the community. What shall we do about it? The elders are acting in the light of their Knowledge. They believe that you can influence nature by sacrifice and loading all our sins on Abdulla's donkey. Why -I even heard Njuguna say that the sacrifice will also bribe God to shut his eyes to the Americans attempts to walk in god's secret places. I believe we can save the donkey and save the community. This place has an MP. We, or rather they, elected him to parliament to represent all the corners of his constituency, however remote. Let us send a strong delegation of men, women, and children to the big city. To the capital. We shall see the MP for this area. The*

*Government is bound to send us help. Or we can bring back help to the others. Otherwise the drought might swallow us all. (POB, p.113)*

Karega tries to convince the masses of the fact that it is their right to react whenever the community's interest is threatened by part of the elite. All through *Petals of Blood*, Karega appears as somebody hounded from job for rousing his fellow workers into being aware of their rights. He is the authentic revolutionary figure who awakens the masses and points out the path to a better future.

Muturi also tries, in *Devil on the Cross*, to awaken the masses and tell them that whatever they may do, the law and the forces of order side with the political elite and for this reason they should stand up and fight for their rights. To support this point we can refer to this passage:

*As a worker, I know very well that the forces of law and order are on the side of those who rob the workers of the products of their sweat, of those who steal food and land from the peasants. The peace and the order and the stability they defend with armoured cars is the peace and the order and the stability of the rich, who feast on bread and wine snatched from the mouths of the poor. Yes, they protect the eaters from the wrath of the thirsty and the hungry. Have you ever seen employers being attacked by the armed forces for refusing to increase the salaries of their workers? What about when the workers go on strike? And they have audacity to talk about violence! Who plants the seeds of violence in this country? That's why I wanted Wangari to fetch them and see for herself, so that all her lingering doubts would vanish, and she would ask herself: have I ever seen the police being sent to silence the rich? (DOC, p.150)*

Still in the sense of raising the awareness of the masses, the non-moneyed elite have shown their willingness to be the

instigators of any necessary movement. It is in this way that Abdulla is the first to volunteer when they start forming the delegation after the principle of going to the city has been accepted. Therefore the elite are at the beginning as well as at the end of any action taken by the community for the benefit of everyone.

In *Devil on the Cross*, the non-moneyed elite are the representative leaders of those whom Ngugi defines as the holy trinity of the peasants, the workers and the students. The members of this elite group after realising that there is a meeting in the cave for a competition to choose the best thieves of Kenya have rightly decided to warn the political elite and the forces of order, but in vain. Then they set to sensitise all those concerned about the dangers of such a gathering and try to stop the manifestation. They manage to gather some people for the angry march of the workers. This has resulted in a short-term victory which conveys Ngugi's belief in the masses' revolution. This victory of the workers, the marchers owe it to the representatives of the holy trinity of the worker, the peasant and the student, namely Muturi who is deeply involved in the march of the workers, protesting against the holy trinity of theft: "*Grabbing, Extortion, and Confiscation*" (DOC, p.177). To support this point we can borrow these words Muturi addresses to Gatuiria and Wariinga:

*Are you leaving so soon, when the struggle has only just started? Do you want to miss the extraordinary spectacle of us chasing away the class of exploiters from their den in the*

*cave? Look at our people stamping firmly and proudly on the ground as if they were hearkening to the call of the masses! I found that most of the preparatory work had been done by the Ilmorog workers themselves. I just helped a bit. You see that small group that seems well dressed? Those are Ilmorog students from the schools around here and the University. This is really wonderful! Future generations will sing about this day from the rooftops and treetops and mountaintops, from Kenya to Elgon, from Elgon to Kilimanjaaro, from Ngong Hills to Nyandaarwa. (DOC, pp.203-204)*

From this speech of Muturi, we learn that the masses are fed up with the exploiters and are ready to take up their arms in order to chase them away. To achieve this goal the masses need the help of more experimented persons. In this trend, Muturi tours the area to gather the forces of the workers, the peasants and the students. He invites Gatuiria and Wariinga to participate in the struggle against the exploiters in these terms:

*Let me tell you, I'm sure that the system of theft and robbery will never end in this country as long as people are scared of guns and clubs. We must struggle and fight against the culture of fear. And there is only one cure: a strong organisation of the workers and peasants of the land, together with those whose eyes and ears are now open and alert. These brave students have shown which side education should serve. My friends, you should come and join us too. Bring your education to us, and don't turn your backs on the people. That's the only way. (DOC, p.205)*

In these terms, Muturi has instilled in the workers' minds the sense of revolution and the importance of unity and organisation in such movements. These actions Muturi has taken can be seen as part of his role of awakening the masses. As a result of his arousing the masses, the unity of the workers and the peasants and the students has led to the

chasing of the thieves and robbers and their friends away from the cave where they had gathered for a devil's feast.

The non-moneyed elite can be considered to be the stirring spur which pushes the masses to revolution. In *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*, Ngugi has chosen a handful of leaders from the working class or the masses whom he compares with another handful of political elite which leads the destiny of the whole nation through corruption, extortion, injustice and other forms of exploitation.

However, we note that in connection to Ngugi's faith in the masses, the marchers in both novels, led by Karega and his like in *Petals of Blood* and led by Muturi and his like in *Devil on the Cross*, have achieved at least a short-term victory in their routing of the whole assembly. This rout is symbolic of a full and final victory which lies in the future "*towards which Karega is already gazing at the end of 'Petals of Blood'.*"<sup>25</sup>

From here on we can notice that some of the elite who side with the masses are fervent in their willingness to change the masses' living conditions after stimulating them up to revolution. But this elite group which is considered as the non-moneyed elite does not limit itself to the awakening of the masses; it goes as far as partaking in the revolutionary movements.

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<sup>25</sup>Ngugi Wa Thiong'O: *An Exploration Of His Writings*, op.cit, p.120.



#### IV-2/ THE ELITE IN THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS

At the very beginning of independence, the political elite had no need to justify the legitimacy of their power. With the appearance of new forms of grievances by the young intellectual elite, more competent and trained with a more radical political thought, and with syndicates gathering the subaltern bureaucracy and the workers, the political elite will be obliged to do it and to give a more precise definition of themselves and their role. There stems the necessity for the elite to show the importance of their role. By showing their importance, the elite not only participate in the awakening of the masses but they also actively partake in the masses' revolutionary movements. But as we have said earlier, the part of the elite which is involved in the masses' liberation struggle is the intellectual elite or those whom Ngugi referred to as the non-moneyed elite. Indeed, through *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*, the non-moneyed elite have showed their collaboration with the masses.

Among these non-moneyed elite we can name Karega who has noticed earlier the disunity of the workers in Ilmorog Theng'eta Breweries:

*The workers were disunited: in their talk he could see that they were proud of their linguistic enclaves and clans and religions and tended to see any emergent leadership in terms of how it would help or hinder the allocation of jobs to people of their own clan and language groups. (POB, p.305)*

This was something which delayed the workers in their struggles for the simple reason that without unity such movements could go nowhere. But fortunately there were some people more warned and those people were ready to do anything for the benefit of the whole community. In the first section of the third chapter of *Petals of Blood*, Karega and his fellow workers of the Theng'eta factory reject the brotherhood based upon the colour of the skin and the community of origins and say no to the injustice of all employers of labour, be they black, white, or yellow; they set up a trade-union and go on strike to force the direction of the factory to recognise and register it. Karega is fired, but immediately elected full-time paid secretary-general of the Theng'eta Breweries Workers' Union, and his restoration is demanded by the workers; leaflets start going about. With this first confrontation, the workers realise their power which is the result of the unity which they manage to get, knowing that they are working for the same employer and then sharing the same problems where as the necessity to fight it together. So, the Theng' eta Breweries example starts spreading: all corporate bodies start setting up Trade-Unions. Employers do not stand, arms folded in front of this situation. In fact they try to break the Theng' eta factory workers union, but in vain. Then, a greater strike is planned, but it is finally forbidden, and Karega is arrested in relation to the murder of Mzigo, Chui and Kimeria.

This shows the determination of the non-moneyed elite to participate in the liberation of the masses. After the example of the workers, we have the elite struggling along with the peasants. As with the workers, peasants also have waited for the help of the non-moneyed elite such as Karega to be united and fight together for the betterment of their living conditions. In Western Kenya where Karega has worked in plantations set up to develop the area, many peasants have been dispossessed of their lands by the company ; those who have not lost their lands have been encouraged to grow sugar cane instead of food crops, and the company has imposed its prices for the sugar cane. As they are not organised, peasants can do nothing about this situation as the following lines put it in: "*The Company buys the sugar at whatever price they deem fit. The peasant growers are not organized to protest and to bargain. So, they lead miserable lives.*"(POB, p.289)

Beside Karega, we can name old Nyakinyua, who is part of those elite who spare no effort for the triumph of the masses. In *Petals of Blood*, when the African Economic Bank decides to auction the lands of those peasants who could not pay back their loans, old Nyakinyua tries to stir up the dispossessed to fight those people whom she calls "*the black oppressors*". In the same novel, Ilmorog peasants, before the drought which swoops down on their area and is threatened to swallow them, undertake with the collaboration of the non-moneyed elite the long walk to Nairobi to force their MP to do

his parliamentary work in connection with that misfortune. When, after a quarrel, they lynch their MP and their leaders are arrested, they go to besiege the police station to demand their release. Actually the struggle does pay because, after this heroic walk, Ilmorog is no longer the same. However it is important to note that Ilmorog owes this triumph to people such as Karega, Abdulla, Munira, Wanja, Old Nyakinyua and their like, who are the representatives of the non-moneyed elite.

In *Devil on the Cross* the non-moneyed elite such as Muturi and his like take part in the march to arrest the assembly of the local thieves and robbers and their foreign friends, after that Wangari has attempted to have them arrested with the collaboration of the forces of order that she later finds on the side of the exploiters. We note that not only her action is vain but it costs her an arrest for disturbing the peace and stability of the country. Indeed the real disturbers of the country's peace and stability are the thieves and robbers who dare to gather for a competition to show off their skills and strategies as far as looting people's goods is concerned. Now the non-moneyed elite, conscious of that injustice which allows a few to exploit the majority by sucking the blood and eating the flesh of the masses, will awaken the masses and take the arms with them to fight that exploitation which is nothing other than neo-colonialism. In *Devil on the Cross*, the non-moneyed elite, namely Muturi as a worker and his like, participate actively in the struggle against the

exploiters. To show that the non-moneyed elite have taken the arms as well as the masses, we can refer to this passage:

*Look at our people stamping firmly and proudly on the ground as if they were hearkening to the call of the masses I found that most of the preparatory work had been done by the Ilmorog workers themselves. I just helped a bit. You see that small group that seems well dressed? Those are Ilmorog students from the schools around here and the university. (DOC, p.203)*

This passage shows that the workers have undertaken a revolutionary movement with the help of the non-moneyed elite. But it is important to point out that our analysis of the elite in the revolutionary movements won't be exhaustive if we fail to pinpoint the reaction of the employers, who are mainly the political elite, vis-à-vis these revolutionary movements.

In face of the spread of the threat of the workers' movements, the power elite do not fold their arms. Indeed they react in various ways. At first, their reactions are verbal, just condemning the workers' struggles and denying them any lawfulness, insisting on the negative effects on the stability and the economic health of the country. In this sense, Nderi wa Riera holds a press conference reported in a newspaper through these lines:

*The MP called for a total and permanent ban on strikes. Strikes generated an atmosphere of tension which could only lead to instability and periodic violence. Strikes should be regarded as deliberate anti-national acts of economic sabotage. Calling on Trade-Union leaders to be unselfish, he asked them to refrain from demanding higher and higher wages without proper regard for the lower income groups or the jobless, who would be the sole beneficiaries of a more*

*equitable reallocation of what would have gone into unregulated wage increases. It was time that Trade-Unions were told in no-uncertain terms that they could no longer hold the country to ransom. (POB, p.194)*

As a reaction, the power elite sometimes try to infiltrate the workers' unions in order to control them from inside; this is why some workers' unions are led by employers, or their representatives, or by members of the party in power. The trouble with such trade unions is that it is not possible for an employer to fight against employers or to lead a movement fighting employers. It is not possible to serve two opposed masters (the capital and the labour) at the same time. This often results in the paralysis of the real fighting of trade-unionism and then of the workers' hope to see their interests be firmly defended. Finally, this simply becomes a collaboration and not trade-unionism.

Sometimes, it is the planned strikes themselves that employers get banned on the basis of various motives. For instance, in *Petals of Blood*, grasping the opportunity of the murder of the three co-directors, the employers get the planned workers' strike banned as if the workers were the authors of their assassination. Indeed, one can wonder in what measure the elimination of the three men can bring a positive change in the strugglers' conditions; as Karega puts it, it is a question of system, not of individuals:

*The incident gives all of you and the employers a chance to kill the Union. I don't believe in the elimination of individuals. There are many Kimerias and Chuis in the country. They are the products of a system, just as workers are products of a*

*system. It is the system that needs to be changed...And only the workers of Kenya and the peasants can do that. (POB, p.308)*

The most frequent reaction of employers is to simply fire the strikers or their leaders, or to break their strikes by menacing to recruit from the many unemployed workers who are walking the streets. For instance, in *Devil on the Cross*, Muturi is fired from the Champion Construction Company by Boss Kihara because he is the leader of the strike they plan to start in order to get their salaries increased: Boss Kihara told them that anybody who is tired of working can go home because there are plenty of unemployed men looking for work; and then he fires all the leaders. Further in the novel, Ndikita wa Nguunji, in his testimony at the competition, boasts (himself) of having fired and replaced all his farm workers for going on strike.

Employers can also set up a sort of union of their own to break the workers' strikes or even eliminate their leaders. For instance, it is for this reason that the Kamwene Cultural Organisation (KCO) is formed in *Petals of Blood*. In the sixth section of the part of the novel entitled "*the journey*", the reader, through an internal confession of Nderi wa Riera, learns that the organisation is founded by the MP and his fellow high personalities of the country with the only aim to fight the masses' movements and, if necessary, to eliminate their leaders. In fact, it is this organisation that has murdered the lawyer, a man who has always been on the side of the people; and in the fourth section of the twelfth chapter

of *Petals of Blood*, Wanja teaches the reader that the three co-directors of Ilmorog Theng' eta Breweries have sworn to eliminate Karega with the KCO, as they have done with the lawyer.

The various reactions of the political elite show their will to use all their strength and power to fight back against the workers' revolutionary movements that are menacing their interests. But in both novels, *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*, despite many actions taken by the political elite to fight back the masses' revolution, the latter have achieved a very important step in their liberation struggle. This is understandable for as stated previously Ngugi believes that "*there is no night so long that it will not give way to the light of day.*"



## CONCLUSION:

Both *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross* have conveyed their author's vision about African elitism. In *Devil on the Cross*, Ngugi has showed his readers the greed of African leaders and their subjugation to the white man controlling Africa from abroad. As evidence for this point we can refer to the meeting of African representatives and their white masters in the cave. In *Petals of Blood*, Ngugi points out the determination of the masses to taste the mushrooms of freedom after a successful battle for Uhuru.

In both novels, Ngugi has confronted two opposed classes: the bourgeoisie and the working class. It is worth noting that Ngugi has presented the newly independent African states in a very pessimistic way. This pessimistic view Ngugi has about the Kenyan elite in particular and the African elite in general is developed in the elite's relationships with the masses and political power, its cultural identity crisis and its attitude vis-à-vis the masses' revolutionary movements.

It is important to note that the definition of African elitism is not an easy task. Our attempt at defining African elitism is far from exhaustive but it has somehow shed some light on the definition of the concept "elite". On the one hand the elite is defined as all those who occupy top and privileged positions in the hierarchy where the importance of either the incomes or the prestige is considered. On the other hand, the elite is defined as the persons and the groups that, besides the power they possess or their influence, contribute to the

historical actions of a community, either by the decisions they take - that is most of the time the case - or by the ideas, the sentiments or the emotions which they express or symbolise. In the light of these definitions of the elite, we note that, through *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*, the African elite are depicted as being a group “manufactured” by the colonist whom they replace and they are often considered to be the white man’s pawns.

The idea that the new African elite are pawns of the white man shows the nature of the relationship between the political elite and the masses. This relationship is tantamount to the one which has existed between the colonists and the colonised. The relationship between the political elite and the masses is summed up in these two terms: exploitation and acceptance. This passive attitude of the masses lies on the fact that they were ignorant and they thought it was more comfortable for them to be led by their fellow black people after they had sent the white man out of Africa. But unfortunately for the masses their new black elite are just continuing the colonial domination in other forms that are using the same political values such as blackmailing, corruption and repression. In this sense independence instead of being the end of the masses’ problems is only for the benefit of the political elite who waste public funds while the majority of the population is sunk into deep poverty.

In fact, the new African elite ape the white man’s way of life in all its forms, be it political or cultural. From the cultural point of view, the elite have swallowed all Western

values without any restriction. The new African elite appear through *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross* as a group of persons black in skin but white in actions and thoughts. This cultural identity crisis of the African elite is satirical in the sense that the elite are boasting (themselves) of being close collaborators of Western imperialism. Ngugi portrays the African elite as a group fascinated by Western values owing to that education which makes people believe that all that is black is bad and all that is white is good. The elite do not care about the applicability or the practicability of what they have been taught in missionary schools and churches. They are viewed by Ngugi as culturally alienated groups whose only concern is to line their pockets even if their fellows or constituents are dying from starvation and disease.

It is worth worrying about these masses led by such an elite but fortunately the masses have later understood that their political elite are not trustworthy. And with the help of a few more alerted and patriotic elite such as Karega, Abdulla, Muturi and their like, the masses undertake different movements to change their conditions. In the revolutionary movements, the masses manifest their dissatisfaction by using the force which has resulted from their unity. With this unity the masses have fought the holy trinity of theft: grabbing, extortion, and exploitation with the holy trinity of the workers, the peasants and the students.

Throughout the two novels Ngugi has adopted different styles which are alike in terms of biblical references. He often uses religious interpretation to refer to some social facts,

considering that every event has a moral and religious basis. Drought was a punishment sent by God for people's carelessness. When the Ilmorogans stopped being passive, the rain fell down. Here Ngugi refers to the religious saying: "God helps those who help themselves." There is also the use of symbols; women stand for land; water is for purification and divine reward; fire is used as chastisement to quench the thirst of the greedy capitalist exploiters who are the devil's angels in *Devil on the Cross*. In *Petals of Blood* the death of Kimeria, Chui, and Mzigo is the symbol of hell promised to the sinners by God.

Ngugi has devoted his life to the liberation of African people in general and the masses in particular. He has proved that his literary productions are not art for art's sake. He has thoroughly dealt with Africa's most acute problems for the emancipation of the masses. Here Christophe Dailly is right when he says: "*The writer is a witness, an analyst, and a critic of the society in which he lives. By the acuity of his perception of problems and the lucidity of his criticism, he contributes to the awakening of the masses' conscience.*" (My translation)<sup>77</sup>

The bulk of the study of elitism in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross* lies in the depiction of the elite's moulding and the elite's partaking in the masses' revolutionary movements. Indeed, Ngugi has succeeded in showing the influences of the elite in the masses' liberation.

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<sup>77</sup> "L'écrivain est témoin, analyste et critique de la société dans laquelle il vit. Par l'acuité de sa perception des problèmes et la lucidité de sa critique, il contribue à l'éveil de conscience des masses." Christophe Dailly: "Vers une réévaluation idéologique de la littérature négro-africaine," in revue de littérature et d'esthétique négro-africaines, NEA, Abidjan 4ème trimestre, 1977, p.35

Through *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross* we notice that there is a handful of elite who stay faithful to the masses' cause even though most of the elite depicted in both novels were just black in skin but white in ideas and actions. However, it is now up to the masses to realise that though they have won some battles, the fight is far from being over, as Ngugi points it: "*We have scorched the snake of colonialism, not killed it. Or rather colonialism was one of the myriad skins the snake can put on.*"<sup>78</sup>

The masses must bear in mind that as the power elite have failed to keep the promises, it comes to them to stand up, strengthen their unity and muck up on the task of bettering their future by fighting mercilessly any kind of exploitation or injustice. One can be optimistic about this struggle because, as the saying goes, "*we can fool some people some time but we can not fool all the people all the time.*"

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<sup>78</sup> *Homecoming*, op cit, p.45

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