

**PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA  
MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH  
UNIVERSITY OF MOHAMED BOUDIAF- M'SILA**

FACULTY OF LETTERS AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

N°:



DOMAIN: FOREIGN LANGUAGES

STREAM: ENGLISH LANGUAGE

OPTION: LITERATURE & CIVILIZATION

**Politics of Language in Ngugi waThiong'o's  
*Petals of Blood***

**Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English in Partial fulfillment  
of Requirements for the Degree of Master**

**By:**

**Miss. Anowar NOUIRI**

**and**

**Miss. Marwa NOUIRI**

**2017 / 2018**

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Special thanks goes to the members of the jury for reading and criticizing this work for areas of improvement.

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my lovely family, *my parents* and my *grandmother*. Thanks for your support, driving force, inspiration, and motivation for me. To my sisters and brothers especially *Soufiane* and *Anis*. This work is dedicated also to all my friends without exception and to my dearest sister *Marwa*.

Additionally, I would like to express my deep gratitude to my supervisor *Mr. Mohammed Senoussi*, thanks for your patience, understanding, as well as for your generous and kind encouragement. Also I would like to express all my sincere thanks to *Dr. Sihem Berra, Mr. Bachir Sahed, Mr. Hamdaoui Athmane* and *Dr. Assia Baghdadi* to whom I shall remain indebted all my life.

*Anowar*

## DEDICATION

First and foremost, my heartfull gratitude and appreciation go to my father *Abed el Hafid* and my mother *Nora*. My husband *Ramzi*, my grandmothers *Warda* and *Kelthoum* may rest in peace. My partner *Anowar*, my sister *Safa* and my brothers *Abed el Basset*, *Mohammed* and especially the youngest **Montassir**. Also i dedicate my work to my all friends without exception. I would like also to thank my advisor, *Mr. Mohammed Senoussi* for his resourcefullness in providing me with relevant advice, critical comments and constructive suggestions throughout the course of the study.

Finally, I was glad to share this work with my dearest sister *Anowar*.

*Marwa*

## ABSTRACT

This study addresses the use of language in Ngugi wa Thiong'o *Petals of Blood* (1979). The selected novel evokes important questions on the nature of language in Kenya during post-colonial era. It gives a truthful description of the implementation of the language among the social classes in Kenya. In this research, we are interested in the literary function of language and why the novelist chooses Gikuyu language as most expressive vernacular medium. This study offers a more adequate account of language's figurative aspects, it clarifies the writer's stylistic strategies and his use of techniques such as narrative suspense, proverbs, songs and figurative language to respond to the domination of the white oppressor in this era. The dissertation examines Ngugi wa Thiong'o *Petals of Blood* from both stylistic and thematic angles. The first chapter deals with the socio-historical context and theoretical background of the novel. It highlights Politics of Language and the events that surrounded the process of writing this literary piece. Also it provides general insights on Decolonizing the Mind. Hence, it sets out to deal with hypothetical thoughts embodied in the novel. Furthermore, in the second chapter, we examine ways in which Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* is a motivated step for the African postcolonial writers to imply their mother tongue. We try also to explain the language persecution suggested by Ngugi when it comes to produce written words concerning the African literature; i.e. this part aims at inspecting and clarifying Ngugi's stylistic strategies.

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## INTRODUCTION

*“An oppressor language inevitably carries racist and negative images of the conquered nation, particularly in its literature, and English is exception.”*

Harry Swellal, "Writing from the Periphery : The case of Ngugi and Conrad," *Rhodes University* Vol. 30, No.1 (May, 2003), pp.55-69; p.55.

Language is often a central question in postcolonial studies. During colonisation, Colonisers usually imposed or encouraged the dominance of their native language into the people they colonised, and even forbid natives to speak their mother tongue. Many writers educated under colonisation recount how students were demoted, or even beaten for speaking their native language in colonial schools. In response to the deterministic imposition of colonial languages, some postcolonial writers and activists advocate a complete return to the use of indigenous languages. Others see the language (e.g. English) is imposed by the coloniser as more practical alternative, using the colonial language both to enhance inter-nation communication. It can be said that, the issue of languages raises several unsolved problematic and questions.

Moreover, most radical among those writers who have chosen to turn away from English, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, a Gikuyu writer from Kenya, began a successful career writing in English before turning to work entirely in his native language. Ngugi posits that “*language, any language, has a dual character: it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture*”<sup>1</sup>. Hence, through language people have not only described the world, but also

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<sup>1</sup> Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonizing the Mind: Politics of Language in African Literature* (Portsmouth, NH : Heinemann, 1986), p.13.

understand themselves through it. English in Africa continues a process of erasing memories of pre-colonial cultures and history and installs the dominance of the new insidious forms of colonialism. Writing in Gikuyu is Ngugi's way not only for harkening back to it, but also of acknowledging and communicating their continuing presence. On the other side of the language debate is Salman Rushdie. He comments on how working on new English can be a therapeutic act of resistance, remaking a colonial language to reflect the postcolonial experience. In the essay *Imaginary Homelands*, he explains that, far from being something that can simply be ignored, the English language is the place where writers can and must work out the problems that confront emerging /recently independent colonies: “*struggles between the cultures within ourselves and the influences a work upon our societies. To conquer the English may be to complete the process of making ourselves free.*”<sup>2</sup>

Additionally, African languages refused totally to die and even their writers to give up and use a European language. They would not simply go the way Latin to become the shells for linguistic archaeology to dig up, classify, and argue about the international conferences. These languages, these heritages of Africa, were -kept. alive by the peasantry. This last saw no contradiction between speaking their own mother -tongues and belonging to a larger national or continental geography. They saw no necessary antagonistic contradiction between belonging to their immediate nationality, to their multinational state along the Berlin-drawn boundaries, and to Africa as a whole. These people happily spoke Wolof, Hausa, Yoruba, Ibo, Arabic, Amharic, Kiswahili, Gikuyu Luo, Luhya, Shona, Ndebele, Kimbundu, Zulu or Lingala without this fact tearing the multinational states apart.<sup>3</sup> Besides, with the imposed social and educational requirement of English, Kenyan languages became subordinated along with Kenyan culture. As Ngugi claims: “*The language of African literature cannot be*

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<sup>2</sup> Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* (United States: Granta, 1992), p17.

<sup>3</sup> Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonizing the Mind :Politics of Language in African Literature* (Portsmouth,NH: Heinemann,1986), p. 23.

*discussed meaningfully outside the context of those social forces which have made it, both an issue demanding our attention and a problem calling for a resolution.*"<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, during postcolonial era when Africa took its independence, many of the African writers divorced their heritage ethnicity and began to write in English and this what creates a deep gap -as it were- and a deep debate between writers including; Achebe, Ngugi and others. That is why, we have chosen *politics of language* in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *petals of blood* to be discussed since the language plays a vital role in shaping some aspects during postcolonial era. Hence, language is adopted as a tool and utilised to express widely differing cultural experiences.

Furthermore, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's controversial novel *Petals of Blood* was based on the investigation of the puzzling murder of three capitalists: Chui, Kemeria and Mzigo, also to represent the different types of classes of people in Kenya. Moreover, the corruption of the elite in domains such politics and economy during pre-colonial, Colonial and post-colonial eras.

Besides, Ngugi wa Thiong'o was targeting the working class in his book *Decolonizing the Mind*. He said "*I knew whom I was writing but not I whom I was writing for*"<sup>5</sup>. In the novel Ngugi showed Munira as a symbol of rejection of the middle class who refused to fit within the Kenyan community. On the other hand, he showed peasant characters as guardians of traditions who were oppressed by the ruling elite and supposed to work together to change their situation and condition.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.4.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.72.

In *Politics of Language*, Ngugi wa Thiong'o investigated the destroying effects of the African *wound culture*<sup>6</sup> on the Kenyan community. Therefore, this research is going to offer an analytical insight on how the novelist responds to the narrative challenge to depict Gikuyu language and oral traditions which held the African heritage.

In addition, the general objective of this study is to identify politics of language in *Petals of Blood*, also to treat the literary and the social values of the aforementioned literary works that deal with it. Under this general objective, this paper tries to examine the major thematic preoccupation of the writer in *Petals of Blood* and how language can be used as an instrument of power and oppression by the dominant classes in society and function, simultaneously, as a vehicle for mass mobilization and interaction. Besides the appreciation of the thematic spirit, a critical analysis of the major post-colonial issues will be tackled. Since *Petals of Blood* is a political satire aimed at provoking opposition and resistance among the people of Kenya.

Similarly, this study intends to deal with a number of questions. The primary question that will guide this study is how the novel *Petals of Blood* depicts the buffetings between languages in postcolonial Kenyan African Culture. Moreover, this study attempts to find out to what extent Ngugi wa Thiong'o's language reflects the postcolonial era and what is the primary aim that led him to write in Gikuyu. Another important question which examines the situation of the author whether he chooses to write in a local language or a major European one; if an African writer set his work in an European language, does his work qualify as African literature and vice versa.

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<sup>6</sup> Owen, Heathcote. "The Form of Violence: Use and Abuse of Gender in French Literature and Film" *South Central Review* Vol. 20, no. 1(Winter, 2002 - Spring, 2003), pp. 1-13; p. 6.

Besides, this study seeks to demonstrate how Ngugi has used language to demonstrate aesthetic pleasure in his Gikuyu. Additionally, when a local language lends terms, in what extent do they occur especially when it comes to the language of the oppressor and the mother tongue. Furthermore, a new question comes is how English language had become an African language or as it were a Slanguage. Hence, one last question that was seriously asked; how the use of language imply an implicit theory of resistance and how authors manipulate language.

An African writer should write in a language that will allow him to communicate effectively with peasants and workers in Africa- in other words, he should write in an African language. As far as publishing is concerned has no doubt that writing in an African language, I have no doubt that writing in an African language is as commercially viable as writing in any other language.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o, " On Writing in Gikuyu ,  
*Indian University Press* Vol. 16, No. 2 Special  
 Issue on Ngugi wa Thiong'o (Summer, 1985), pp.  
 151- 156 , p. 151.

It can be said that, it is a simple fact of the history of the so-called new African nations that many of the literary works produced by these citizens of these countries before and even after independence were written in the languages of the European colonial powers. This is not surprising as these colonial powers promoted literacy in their languages often to the detriment of African languages. Thus, many African writers, including Ngugi wa Thiong'o and others who today tend to reject European languages, produced their early works in a European language. However, some of them thought that it would be more African to write in African languages and called for a rejection of European languages.

Others like Chinua Achebe, Azekiel Mphahlel, and Timothy Wangusa, did not heed the call. They thought that English, or any European language that was well mastered by the

writer, could equally be used by the African writer. *Achebe feels that English can carry the weight of his African experience*<sup>7</sup>. He adds, however, that this will have to be “*a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its African surrounding*”<sup>8</sup>.

Besides, other world languages fit this into this role. Achebe states:

The price a world language must be prepared to pay is submission to many kinds of use. African writers should not aim to use English in a way that its value as a medium of international exchange will be lost. He should aim at fashioning a form of English that is at once universal and able to carry his peculiar experience.<sup>9</sup>

Additionally, *Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays* (1965-1987) by Achebe, in which we find in him a spirited defense of the appropriation of the European languages by African writers, he asserts that these languages have ultimately become the national, hence unifying languages in the formerly colonised nations. He strongly believes that African writers write out of an African experience and of commitment to an African destiny. However, a study that deals with language in Ngugi's vernacular texts cannot avoid responding to some issues raised in the ‘**language debate**’ in African literature. Since the often-cited conference of African writers of English Expression at *Makerere University College* (1962), the question on the right language to be used by African creative writers has. Likewise, there were other counterparts in French colonies, the generation of war Senghor and David Diop included in *Anthologie de la nouvelle poesie negre et malgache de langue francaise*(1947-1948); they all wrote in European languages as was the case with all the participants in that momentous encounter on Makerere hill in Kampala.

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<sup>7</sup>Chinua Achebe, *The African Writer and the English Language : Morning Yet on Creation Day*(London : Heinemann, 1975), p. 167.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Chinua Achebe, *The African Writer and the English Language : Morning Yet on Creation Day*(London : Heinemann, 1975), p 61.

Besides, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffins and Hellen Tiffin, for instance, have addressed themselves extensively to language in post - colonial societies in their book *The Empire Writes Back*, providing theoretical paradigms of looking at textual strategies in the use of language in post- colonial writing. Just as Ngugi has vehemently argued, the three authors see the European languages as having been imposed on the colonial subject as part of the imperial project.

Hence, Ngugi in *Writers in Politics* (1981); he moves a step further than Ashcroft in which he rejects European languages and a return to the roots of his language. Simon Gikandi in *the Epistemology of Translation Ngugi, Matigari, and the politics of language* (1991) casts doubts on Ngugi's achievement in writing in the Gikuyu language. The gist of his argument is that once the Gikuyu text is translated, it falls into the same European tradition that Ngugi sought to discard.

Furthermore, writers who support the continued use of European languages advance other reasons for their choice. Hence, many African languages are still largely spoken and cannot at this stage be used in the production of written works. Besides, most literate Africans today are literate not in African languages but in European language. Furthermore, the use of an European language also gives the writers access to a wider world audience. While some of these reasons have been dismissed by certain advocates of certain languages, (Abiola Irele, and Nama), one point still needs to be made about this language controversy.

Apart from expressing the fear that the exclusive use of African languages might, on account of the considerable linguistic diversity of African nations, give rise to ethnic literatures rather than national literatures, writers who support the use of European languages have hardly condemned the use of Africa languages. They have simply found it more expedient to use European languages.

Additionally, Omole aptly describes this dilemma faced by African writers who are led by circumstances to use a European language as “a clash between a desirable ideal and a compelling reality”.<sup>10</sup> While the compelling reality resides largely in Africa’s linguistic complexities and the unpreparedness of many of the numerous African languages to immediately serve the writer’s purpose. The virtues of these African languages thus appear to be acknowledged by most writers and critics.

Incidentally, Amin Maalouf in *Question de Langue et d'identité: Le Cas d'Amin Maalouf* (2009), he is another case who has such issue of using different languages - as it were – divorcing the mother tongue starting to write in other languages, and debating in politics of language the issue of using different languages. Maalouf encourages and supports the **Multilingualism**; he claims that “*Do not give up your languages !!! You’ve got the right to speak any language you like*”.<sup>11</sup>

The issue of language offers a fertile scope for literary studies; therefore, this research is conducted to add a new vision concerning this issue.

This research is going to present a stylistic and thematic assessment of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* will examine the theme of Politics of Language. Whereas the stylistic approach will be used in this study to identify how Ngugi has portrayed culture, land, language, traditions, in politics of Language under *Petals of Blood* through the use of metaphors, symbols, similes and figurative language in general. This research will approach its questions by applying Ngugi’s *Decolonizing the Mind*. In the light of this theory, the study aims broadly at showing how Ngugi uses his text as an effective paradigm to inner issues by raising national consciousness and contributing in the development of the African language.

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<sup>10</sup> Omole J O. A, *Sociolinguistic Analysis of Wole Soyinka's the Interpreters Ph.D.Dissertation* (University of Wisconsin : Milwaukee, 1985), p. 26.

<sup>11</sup> Amin Maalouf , *Question de la Langue d'identité : Le Cas d'Amin Maalouf* (Synergies Sud-Est européen n°2 :Tsokolidou, Giota Gatsi , 2009), p.195.

All in all, “an African writer should write in a language that will allow him to communicate effectively with peasants and workers in Africa, and he should write in an African language”<sup>12</sup>. Ngugi in *Petals of Blood* played the role of the awakener of the people through his language Gikuyu.

This dissertation will be structured as the following: **Chapter One:** Socio-Historical and Theoretical Context; **Chapter Two:** Language as Political Medium and Cultural Marker.

### **Chapter One. The Socio-Historical and Theoretical Context**

Literature is the mirror of society, they, both, reflect each other. The social upheavals and calamities provoke the writers to portray the people's struggle and sufferance. Thus, Ngugi wa Thiong'o writes his novel, *Petals of Blood*, to exhibit and demonstrate the importance of the language and the use of the mother tongue instead of the language of the oppressor. He writes about the clash of the two languages, the dominant white civilization and the marginalized Native African one.

This chapter will discuss the **Socio-Historical Context and Theoretical Background** of *Petals of Blood* as a Post Modernist literary work. It is divided into five main sections.

The first section is entitled **Kenya during Colonialism (Pre-colonial, Colonial, Post-colonial)** this part will shed light on the history of Kenya, and the the history of language and its Native users. The second section, **Ngugi wa Thiong'o Politics of Language** will investigate how he uses Gikuyu language to write back. The third section, which is about **Decolonizing the Mind** will exhibit Ngugi's attempts to free the African recognition. Furthermore, it will discuss **Decolonizing the Word: Language, Culture and**

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<sup>12</sup> Ngugi wa Thiong'o, “ On Writing in Gikuyu, ”*Indiana University Press* Vol. 16, N. 2 (Summer, 1985), pp. 151-156, p. 151.

**Self** that will emphasise on the need of the use of the African cultural heritage. In the fourth section entitled, **Language as Culture** that is language is unseperated part of culture; they complete each other. Hence, three subtitles will be undertaken including, **Decolonizing the Tongue, The Subversion of the African Mind,** and **Oral Tradition** will delineate Ngugi's desire to assimilate the Kenyan community with the African vase. The last section, **The Syndromes of Hybridity (Homi Bhabha)**; those concepts tackled the power of how the African peasants resistance against discrimination.

## **Chapter Two: Language as a Political Medium and Cultural Marker**

Numerous post-colonial theorists such as Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie believes that the literary texts are dynamic weapons; they are more powerful than the imperialistic dogmatic ascendancy mainly when they are written in the Native's language. Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* is considered as a resistant literary text. It bestows the evil side of the white and perpetuates the African language depending on the oppressed's mother language. Thus, this chapter is devoted for the stylistic and the thematic study of the novel. The first section, **The Allegorical Function of the Title** will analyse the title Ngugi uses in his novel as a whole, *Petals of Blood*, will explain the esoteric meaning of this expression as a title for the novel along with its spiritual allusion and denotation in the African language.

The first subsection, **Symbolism of *Petals of Blood*** will shed light on the use of the symbols of flower and blood as metaphorical expressions to anticipate the African future. The second subsection, ***Petals of Blood* as an Utopian Motif** denotes how the title represent a gleam of hope and optimism for the villagers of Ilmorog. The second section, **Which Language for African Literature?** Will focus on which language is appropriate for the production of the African literature since there is multiplicity of languages in Africa. The third

section, **The Language Controversy** will show the psychological issue of language in contrast with the oppressor's one.

The fourth section, **Cultural Heritage and the Didactic Style** is devoted to speak about Ngugi's intention and constancy behind writing *Petals of Blood* and its role in enlightening the literary texts for the African people. The first subsection, **Orality: The Use of Folktales** among the technics used by Ngugi wa thiong'o' to express the mysteries and the beauty of the African orature. The second subsection, **Songs as an Expressive Medium** will represent the national African heritage held in sort of rhythmized meters which is an essential part in the African's tradition.

The fifth section, ***Petals of Blood* Conceptual Analysis** will show how the coloniser exploited the lands of the peasants in Ilmorog and how they reacted against this policy; for the Africans; **man without a land, is a man without honor**. Besides, the impact of capitalism on the African society along with oppression and discrimination in all the domains that is why they resisted the colonial rule in order to take their independence. The final section, will treat the situation of women during post-colonial period and how they have been oppressed sexually, psychologically and socially and their vital role in the process of freeing Kenya.

This research treats The Theory of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's **Decolonizing the Mind**; Wa Thiong'o's theory charges the Native writers to actualize the process of writing in their languages and ensure that their literary texts are affiliated to their people strive sovereignty and liberation from the dominion contexts. He argues that the amalgamation of the Native's culture and language with the colonizer's language empowers the literary texts and makes the writers powerful and persuasive than the colonial power itself. This eventuates when those intellectuals begin to speak to their people and to the oppressor in the colonizer's

language. Thus, through using this theory. It is one of the most important theories of Ngugi wa Thiong'o which aims to free the African mind from the European control.

## CHAPTER ONE: SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND THEORITICAL BACKGROUND

We therefore learnt to value words for their meaning and nuances. Language was not a mere string of words. It had a suggestive power well beyond the immediate and lexical meaning. Our appreciation of the suggestive magical power of language was reinforced by the games we played with words.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonizing the Mind: Politics of Language in African Literature* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1986), p. 287.

It can be said that, the question of language probably one of, if not the most fundamental issue, in the cultural politics today. The importance of language is determined by the question of how does a nation choose a national language within a context of the multiplicity of languages; “*whose language and history will our literature draw upon foreign languages and the history and cultures carried by those languages or national languages.*”<sup>13</sup> What is more, Africa has thousand and thousands of languages. For sure, many of the languages that form part of Africa’s cultural complexity are spoken by a small number of speakers. “*Some of the languages spoken by millions including ; Dholuo, Kiswahili, Gikuyu, Lulu-hya, Kikamba, Kimasai, Kigiriama, etc,*”<sup>14</sup> even before the advent of the colonial domination. Swahili in East Africa and Hausa-Fulani in West Africa were lingua francas, that is, languages used in common by “*multilingual groups.*”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Simon Gikandi, "writing and the Politics of Language," *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Spring, 1992), pp. 131-144 ; p. 132.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 132.

<sup>15</sup>Amin Maalouf, *Question de la Langue et d'identité : Le Cas d'Amin Maalouf* (Synergies Sud-East Européen n°2 : Tsokolidou, Giota, Giota Gasti, 2009), p. 195.

Besides, this historical phenomenon of some of the great African languages becoming lingua francas has somewhat reduced the complications involved in choosing a “national language.”<sup>16</sup> Yet, complications remain still; “English would remain Kenya people's first language of international communication,”<sup>17</sup> parenthetically English language was declared the official language ; it was to be used in all important sectors, education inclusive. Other than, since English language is the language of the oppressor also the language of the coloniser, it has been imposed by force –as it were- on the colonised; this last who was ready to be colonised and use the European language instead of his mother tongue that he was obliged to use as the Black Hermit Ngugi asserts many times, but the majority divorced their ethnic heritage writing and mother tongue starting to write in English.

Moreover, in the wake of African independence and the ongoing debate on the language question, Ngugi wa Thiong'o has emerged as a leading advocate of indigenous languages in African literature. Other than, “his decision to write in Gikuyu and the range of criticisms his advocacy of mother tongue has engendered”<sup>18</sup> ; his use of Gikuyu must be seen not as a threat to national unity, but rather as an authentic expression of African identity reflecting its cultural and linguistic diversity and to quote he states the following :

The language of African literature cannot be discussed meaningfully outside the context of those social forces which have made it, both an issue demanding our attention and a problem calling for a resolution.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Simon Gikandi, " Writing and the Politics of Language," p. 132.

<sup>17</sup>Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonizing the Mind*, p. 11.

<sup>18</sup>Ngugi wa Thiong'o, “ On Writing in Gikuyu, ”*Indiana University Press*, Vol. 16, N.2 (Summer, 1985), pp. 151-156, p. 155.

<sup>19</sup>Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonizing the Mind*, p. 4.

In addition to that, “*writing in Gikuyu has been seen as one of several counter-discursive strategies*”<sup>20</sup>; i. e. he employs to achieve the goal of decolonisation of the mind. These strategies include oral features associated with traditional storytelling and heteroglossic use of multiple languages and multiple voices to index social roles and broader political realities. Moreover, deprived of a native language, the African writer is deracinated and decultured. And if forced to write in the imperialist's language, the African writer risks absorption into the imperialist's culture. As a practical problem, “*choice of language is obviously crucial to all writers working in a multilingual colonial or post-colonial environment.*”<sup>21</sup> It can be said that, in Africa, the debate over the choice of language has raged for decades; among others, Achebe and Okara have been seen as developing a “*hybrid language,*”<sup>22</sup> that is, “*English that is purely local... which expresses the experience of the African... authentically*”<sup>23</sup> and to be sure, many writers like Ngugi since he has completely rejected European tongues in favor of African vernacular languages. Also, he asserts that : “*language is thus mediating between me and my own self; between my own self and other selves; between me and nature.*”<sup>24</sup>

This chapter provides a broader context to better understand the socio-historical context of Politics of Language in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood*. It sheds light on the issue of language as a whole then on the indigenous and vernacular languages and their use specifically. As well as, it highlights the dominance of the coloniser's language on the native language. Likewise, it delineates the features of the Gikuyu language in Kenya and the controversy of the African mind in general.

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<sup>20</sup> Katherine Williams, " Decolonising the Word : Language, Culture, and Self in the Works of Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Gabriel Okara, " *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 22, N. 4 (Winter, 1991), pp. 53-61 ; p. 54.

<sup>21</sup> Katherine Williams, " Decolonising the Word : Language, Culture, and Self in the Works of Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Gabriel Okara, " *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 22, N. 4 (Winter, 1991), pp. 53-61 ; p. 54.

<sup>22</sup> Nichols Lee, *African Writers at the Microphone*. (Washington: D.C: Three Continents Press, 1984), p.124.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p.124.

<sup>24</sup> Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonizing the Mind*, p. 15.

## 1. Kenya during Colonialism

To look from the tribe to a wider concept of human association is to be progressive. When this begins to happen, a Kenyan nation will be born. It will be an association, not of different tribal entities, but of individuals, free to journey to those heights of which they are capable. Nationalism, by breaking some tribal shells, will be a help. But nationalism should not in turn become another shackle. Nor should it be the end. The end should be man ultimately freed from fear, suspicion and parochial attitudes: free to develop and realise his full creative potential.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Homecoming* (London: Heinemann, 1972), p. 24.

The history of Kenya dates as early as 2000 BC when a patchwork of “*ethnic groups, each ethnic groups, each with their own culture and language, settled in the country.*”<sup>25</sup> They came from every corner of Africa—Turkanas from Ethiopia, Kikuyu, Akamba and Meru from West Africa; and the Masai, Luo and Samuru from the southern part of Sudan. However, archeological findings suggest that humans roamed here more than 20 million years ago. One of the most famous and complete hominid skeletons ever discovered is the 1.6 million year old *Homo erectus* known as the Turkana Boy, which is displayed at the Nairobi National Museum. Kenya is thus fondly referred to as the cradle of humanity or the cradle of mankind from which descendants moved out to populate the world.

By around the 8th century Arabs, Indians, Persians and even Chinese were arriving on the Kenyan coast to trade skins, ivory, gold and spices. The Swahili language, a mixture of Bantu and Arabic then developed as a lingua franca for trade between the different peoples.

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<sup>25</sup>James Ogude, *Ngugi's Novels and African History: Narrating the Nation* (London: Pluto Press, 1999), p. 5.

## 1.1. Pre- Colonial History

Kenyan history should be about the struggles of the subaltern, their resistance to colonial and neocolonial domination in the postcolonial state. Evidently, around 2000 BC, Cushitic-speaking people from Northern Africa settled in the part of East Africa that is now Kenya. By the first century AD, the Kenyan coast was frequented by Arab traders who due to Kenya's proximity to the Arabian Peninsula, established Arab and Persian colonies there. The Nilotic and Bantu people also moved into the region during the first millennium AD. And settled inland. Likewise, the Europeans evolving from a mixture of Bantu and Arabic, the Swahili language then developed as a lingua franca for trade between the different peoples. When the Portuguese arrived in 1498, the Arab dominance in the coast was clipped, as the port of Mombasa became an important resupply stop for ships bound for the Far East. The Portuguese gave way in turn to Islamic control under the Imam of Oman in the 1600s until another European influence came along, this time from the United Kingdom during the 19th century.

## 2.1. Colonial History

The colonial history of Kenya dates from the Berlin conference of 1885 when East Africa was first divided into territories of influence by the European powers. The British government founded the East African protectorate in 1895 and soon after, opened the fertile highlands to white settlers. Even before it was officially declared a British colony in 1920. The settlers were allowed voice in government, while the Africans and the Asians were banned from direct political participation until 1944. During this period some 32,000 Indians were brought into Kenya to work on building the Kenya-Uganda railway line. Many stayed after it was completed, as did most of the Indian traders and small businessmen.

In 1942, Kenya embarked on its long hard road to National Sovereignty, as the Mau Mau movement was founded, comprising of members of the Kikuyu, Embu, Meru and Kamba tribes. Therefore, *“this struggle crystallised itself in the Mau Mau anticolonial war, a struggle which should continue to inspire new resolves for freedom and dignity in Kenya’s post-independence period.”*<sup>26</sup> This movement was a *“sure source of instant inspiration”*<sup>27</sup>, it arrives –as it were- to the central link in the tradition of struggle among the subaltern and seems to be at *“the heart of Keyan sense of history in all their narratives.”*<sup>28</sup> In 1953, Jomo Kenyatta was charged with directing the Mau Mau and sentenced to seven years imprisonment, and *“the Mau Mau becomes a major symbol around which the various aspects of Kenyan history cohere.”*<sup>29</sup> Another freedom fighter Dedan Kimathi was arrested in 1956 for his role in the Mau Mau rebellion as one of the leaders. Dedan Kemathi was subsequently hanged by the colonists. From October 1952 to December 1959, Kenya was put under a state of emergency because of the Mau Mau rebellion against British colonial rule. Thousands of Kenyans were incarcerated in detention camps.

By 1956, the death toll stood at more than 13,500 Africans (guerrillas, civilians and troops) and about 100 Europeans. In 1959 Jomo Kenyatta was released from prison, but put under house arrest. Hence, in August 1961 Kenyatta was freed and became president of KANU (Kenya Africa National Union) in October. Additionally, in 1960 the British government officially announced their plan to a democratically elected African government.

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<sup>26</sup>James Ogude, *Ngugi’s Novels and African History*, p.9.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p.17.

### 1. 3. Post- Colonial History

During the elections held in May 1963 KANU won the majority of the seats. Kenya got its independence on 12 December 1963, with Kenyatta as a prime minister. The following year, Kenyatta becomes the first president of Kenya and Commonwealth. The minority party, KADU ( Kenya African Democratic Union), representing a coalition of small ethnic groups, dissolved itself voluntarily in 1964 and joined KANU. Hence, in 1966, a small but significant left opposition party, KPU (Kenya people's Union), was formed by Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, a former vice president and Luo elder. KPU was banned shortly thereafter and its leader detained in 1969 and Kenya became a 'de facto' single party state.

Additionally, the 1988 elections reinforced the one-party system. However, in December 1991, Parliament repealed the one-party section of the constitution. By early 1992, a number of new parties had formed, and multiparty elections were held in December the same year. The division in the opposition led to Moi's re-election and his KANU party retained a majority of the legislature. Furthermore, parliamentary reforms in November 1997 expanded political rights and the number of political parties increased quickly. Again because of a divided opposition, Moi was re-elected in the December 1997 elections. KANU won 113 out of 222 parliamentary seats, but due to defections, the party had to depend on the support of minor parties to forge a working majority.

In October 2002, a coalition of opposition parties joined forces with a faction that broke away from KANU to form NaRC (National Rainbow Coalition). Then, in December 2002, the NaRC Candidate, Mwai, Kibaki was elected president. He garnered 62% of the vote and NaRC won 130 out of 222 parliamentary seats.

## 2. Ngugi wa Thiong'o Politics of Language

It was then that we were confronted with a practical question: in what language should we write ? If we were going to prepare a script for the people, what language should we use? The very fact that we had to ask ourselves such a question ?the answer to which was so obvious ? was a measure of how far we had come to be alien- ated from our people. In 1977 we could still ask ourselves, "In what language should we write a play for performance in a Gikuyu- speaking village ? Well, it was simply common sense and practical necessity that persuaded us to start writing in Gikuyu.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o, " On Writing in Gikuyu , " *Indian University Press* Vol. 16, N. 2 (Summer, 1985), pp. 151-156 ; p. 152.

The use of the Gikuyu language as opposed to the English language has had an important influence on Ngugi's style. The forms of his vernacular novels have a higher affinity with the African oral literary tradition and folktales than his earlier works whose orientation is basically Eurocentric. Parenthetically, Ngugi had finally "*begun to address an audience of workers and peasants who had served as central subjects in his novels and plays*"<sup>30</sup> workers and peasants in his and seeking to address himself to the masses as represented by wor<sup>30</sup> works, he has engaged them in a discourse that heavily invest in their popular idioms and modes of literary imagination. It is with this in mind that this Politics of Language investigates how Ngugi has used Gikuyu language to generate the language discourses in general.

Literary scholarship on Ngugi has always tended to point towards one direction concerning the decision to abandon the English language and use the Gikuyu language in his writing, according to this saying it can be said that "*effective post-colonial voice can only be*

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<sup>30</sup>Simon Gikndi, " Ngugi's Conversion : Writing and the Politics of Language," *Research in African Literature* Vol. 23, N. 1 ( Spring, 1992), pp. 131-144 ; p. 131.

*found in the total rejection of the European languages and a return to the roots.*"<sup>31</sup> Many findings have argued that he has done this to use the language of his people and his target audience also it should be taken into consideration the workers and peasants who in fact could understand.

The move has been seen as a rebellion against the colonizing languages of the West that accorded African languages an inferior position. It was for him the proverbial return to the roots. Unlike to, he is dismayed by the African writers, including Achebe, Mphahlele and Gabriel Okara who believe in the **Africanisation** of the **metropolitan** languages, taking Achebe as an example who wrote "*I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit new African surroundings*"<sup>32</sup> to Ngugi defeating position that only participates to the impoverishment of African languages, in addition to what has been said, Ngugi derides from the admission of Gabriel Okara who states that :

As a writer who believes in the utilization of African ideas, African philosophy and African folklore and imagery to the fullest extent possible, I am of the opinion. the only way to use them effectively is to translate them almost- literally from the African language native to the writer into whatever European language he is using as medium of expression. I have endeavoured in my words to keep as close as possible to the vernacular expressions. For, from a word, a group of words, a sentence and even a name in any African language, one can glean the social norms, attitudes and values of a people.<sup>33</sup>

This position, which Ngugi himself has persistently and vehemently affirmed, is indisputable. Nevertheless, scholars seem to have remained ignorant of the fact that writing in

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<sup>31</sup>Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Writers in Politics* ( London : Heinemann, 1981), p. 53.

<sup>32</sup> *Decolonizing the Mind*, p. 8.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

vernacular presented him with fresh aesthetic possibilities that have significantly influenced the style in his fiction.

He has so far published three children's stories, two plays, two novels and a few poems in the mother tongue. Yet, whereas much has been written of his other works and the translations of the Gikuyu texts, there exists a dearth of the systematic analysis of the original Gikuyu works. An appreciation of the language use and style in the vernacular texts as unique aesthetic objects is desirable. It is therefore the mission of this study to investigate how Ngugi has generated aesthetic pleasure in writing in the Gikuyu language through a stylistic analysis of his first, and in our opinion, more successful Gikuyu novel is *Caitani Mutharaba-ini*. Ultimately an analysis of how the Gikuyu literary language has thrived within a distinct literary tradition of the Aagikuyu community is inevitable.

Ngugi has used language to generate aesthetic pleasure in his first Gikuyu language novel *Caitani Mutharaba-ini*. His shift from writing in the English language to the vernacular needs to be investigated to determine whether there is any significant change that is occasioned by this move with regard to the language of his artistic dispensation. We need to interrogate specific linguistic choices to show how they contribute to the novel's achievement of its communicative function. To quote his saying:

Why, we may ask, should an African writer, or any writer become so obsessed by taking from his mother-tongue to enrich other tongues?...we never ask ourselves: how can we enrich our languages? How can we 'prey' on the rich humanist and democratic heritage in the struggles of other peoples in other times and other places to enrich our own? Why not have Balzac, Tolstoy, Sholokhov.. .Aristotle and Plato in African languages? And why not create literary monuments in our own languages?<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *Decolonizing the Mind*, p.8.

The author's manipulation of language, establishing in the process the extra linguistic factors that influence it, is bound to illuminate the aesthetic achievement that Ngugi makes in the Gikuyu text as compared and contrasted with his literary use of the English language. There is the need to place the Gikuyu literary language as experienced in the narrative into the broader socio-cultural context of the Aagikuyu community to determine the novel's communicative function as an aesthetic objects. Furthermore, they spoke Gikuyu as they worked in the fields. *"We spoke Gikuyu in ,and outside the home. I can vividly recall those evenings of storytelling around the fireside. It was mostly the grown-ups telling the children but everybody was interested and involved."*<sup>35</sup>

The way Ngugi has manipulated the Gikuyu language in *Devil on the Cross*, *Petals of Blood*, *Grain of wheat* and *Weep not Child*. These specifically focus on the lexical choices, the use of figurative and easthetic language and the appropriation of the oral tradition storytelling and folktales in the novels. Hence, The analysis further entail the explanation of the social, hystorical and cultural contexts that influence our interpretation of specific linguistic choices.

His decision to change from using the English language to Gikuyu as the language of his literary expression has been an issue that has attracted various responses in the ever-raging language debate in African literature as to whether it was justified. Besides, he has distinguished himself as the foremost critic of the **metropolitan** languages including English, French, and Portuguese as the languages of African writers' creative expression. This makes him a most appropriate choice for this study, but Achebe indeed says the reverse; to quote:

There has been an impassioned controversy about African literature in non- African languages. But what is a non-African language? English and French certainly. But what

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<sup>35</sup> *Decolonizing the Mind*, p. 10.

about Arabic? What about Swahili even? Is it then a question of how long the language has been present on African soil? If so how many years should constitute effective occupation? For me it is again a pragmatic matter. A language spoken by Africans on African soil, a language in which Africans write justifies itself.<sup>36</sup>

The fact that Ngugi switched to the use of the Gikuyu language in order to raise consciousness to his target workers and peasants in a language they could deal with.. Hardly has it been investigated how the use of the Gikuyu language has contributed to the construction of his Gikuyu works as effective objects. He had made in using his vernacular in his fiction will hopefully be a contribution to literary scholarship on him. *Devil on the cross* is Ngugi's first Gikuyu novel.

Its writing marked a radical departure from the **Eurocentric** orientation that his writing career had taken in that it stands out from his earlier novels not only in its use of vernacular, but also in its formal construction. It parodies on oral narration that is highly conscious of an audience at hand, and derives a lot of its linguistic choices from the oral literature of the Aagikuyu community. It is also more voluminous and more stylistically intriguing in its use of fantasy, caricature and narrative voices than his other Gikuyu novel *Petals of Blood*.

Ngugi's trajectory has been often understood as a successful effort to improve the people's level of education, to recuperate the peasant's oral history, and to produce a literature that would be closer to the people's reality and to which they would have access, reffering to Literature; "*this does not grow or develop in a vacuum; it is given impetus, shape, direction andeven area of concern by social, political and economic forces in a particular society.*"

<sup>37</sup>The relationship between creative literature and these other forces cannot be

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<sup>36</sup>Chinua Achebe, *Hopes and Impediments : Selected Essays* (Nairobi : Heinemann, 1988), p. 63.

<sup>37</sup>Ngugi wa Thiong' o, *Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture and Politics*, (London: Heinemann, 1972), p.16.

ignored, “especially in Africa, where modern literature has grown against the gory background of European imperialism and its changing manifestations: slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism.”<sup>38</sup> It has been taken, in other words, as an attempt to empower the people, it is the same with “African languages in which they have been kept alive by the peasantry, even after the European colonization processes,”<sup>39</sup> it benefits us to express ourselves in our native languages.

Ngugi's politics of language deals class division and is carried out in order for the writer to reject realism without renouncing it suggests a profound Gikuyu of his proposals. If realism persisted in the works that came after *Petals of Blood* and if that Ngugi's sole reason to start writing in Gikuyu. In other words, if Ngugi was never really concerned with the language question in Africa, but only with his writing career as Gikuyu wants to believe, then, at least Ngugi contributed (and keeps contributing) to the development of the language, it should be noticed, however, that any language can be used as an instrument of power and oppression by the dominant classes in society and function, simultaneously, as a vehicle for mass mobilization and interaction.

Moreover, as Ngugi wa Thiong'o comments in the language of African theatre, “the process was one of continuous learning. Learning of our history-learning of what obtains in factories. Learning of what goes on in farms and plantations. Learning our language, for the peasants were essentially the guardians of the language through years of use.”<sup>40</sup> In the writer's words, the project ultimately forced him to turn to Gikuyu, his mother tongue, and to begin writing in that language. All in all, an African writer should write in a language that will help him to convey his messages and to express attitudes effectively with peasants and workers in Africa, and he should write in an African language including, Gikuyu, Swahili and so on;

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<sup>38</sup>Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Homecoming*, p.16.

<sup>39</sup>*Decolonizing the Mind*, p. 45.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

for instance Ngugi in *Petals of Blood* played the role of the awakener of the people through his language Gikuyu.

In addition to what has been said, Ngugi writes *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross* with the intention to address the task of decolonising the African mind. He has been pre-eminent amongst those recent African writers seeking to decolonise African cultures. His project involves a decisive shift of language regime, from the ex-colonial languages, as a principal means of expression; “*this shift from political economy to language has an important ideological implication, it marks Ngugi's break with his Marxist past and its materialist theories of language and allows him to bolster his case for language choice by positing a theory of identity and social consciousness*”<sup>41</sup> which, “*in its nativism, ignores historicity and social agency.*”<sup>42</sup>

Parenthetically, Ngugi implemented his beliefs that the use of European language helps-as it were- the neo- colonialist domination of Africa by consolidating hegemonic cultural power. It can be said that, Ngugi wa Thiong'o believes that one way to reject the culture of imperialism is to stop using their language . Likewise, in *Decolonizing the Mind*, he argues for literature which is firmly and clearly committed to political change, and like his later fiction and drama are grounded in his conviction that international capitalism and its attendant neo-colonialism are highly cause of the poverty of the mass and corruption of values and culture in Kenya.

What is more, Ngugi's reasons for rejecting English language and taking up Gikuyu are presented in the series of essays gathered in *Decolonizing the Mind*. He rejects the

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<sup>41</sup>Gikandi S, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 273.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 273.

language of the colonisers “as the most powerful vehicle”<sup>43</sup> through which the coloniser’s “power fascinated and held the soul prison.”<sup>44</sup> “The bullet was the means of physical subjugation. Language was the means of spiritual subjugation.”<sup>45</sup>

### 3. Decolonizing the Mind

*Decolonising the Mind* is Ngugi's Theory of Language, in which language exists as culture and "language exists as communication, Language as communication and as culture are then products of each other. Communication creates culture; culture is a means of communication. Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world. How people perceive themselves and affects how they look at their culture, at their places politics and at the social production of wealth, at their entire relationship to nature and to other beings. Language is thus inseparable from ourselves as a community of human beings with a specific form and character, a specific history, a specific relationship to the world.

Communication between human beings propels the evolution of a culture, he argues, but language also carries the histories, values, and aesthetics of a culture along with it. As he puts it, “Language as culture is the collective memory bank of a people's experience in history. Culture is almost indistinguishable from the language that makes possible its genesis, growth, banking, articulation, and indeed its transmission from one generation to the next.”<sup>46</sup>

Furthermore, in *Decolonising the Mind*, Ngugi sees language, rather than history or culture, as the enabling condition of human consciousness: The choice of language and the use of language is central to a people's definition of themselves in relation to the entire

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<sup>43</sup> *Decolonizing the Mind*, p.9.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p.289.

universe. Hence language has always been at the heart of the two contending social forces in the Africa of the twentieth century. "The book *Decolonizing the mind is my farewell to English as a vehicle for any of my writings. From now on it is Gikuyu and Kiswahili all the way.*"<sup>47</sup>

### **3. 1. Decolonizing the Word : Language, Culture and Self**

The central difficulty for Ngugi is how to write in the language of the oppressor-and why, in Ngugi's case, it is necessary to abandon that language and the appeal of its supposed universality. Deprived of a native language the African writer deracinated and decultured. And, if forced to write in the imperialist's language, the African writer risks absorption into the imperialist's culture. As a practical problem, choice of language is obviously crucial to all writers working in a multilingual colonial or post-colonial environment. In Africa, the debate over the choice of language has raged for decades.

Ngugi attempts to fight their way out of psychological and political alienation by examining the nature of language and by raising the question of whether language constructs culture or is constructed by it. He does it explicitly in *Decolonizing the Mind*, where he reejects English as the language of choice for the African writer .

He states that Language, any language, has a dual character: it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture, to quote:

He outlines a dialectic of language process that is both historical and communal. Language as communication and as culture are then he continues, products of each other. Communication creates culture: culture is a means of communication. Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>*Decolonizing the Mind*, p.82.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13.

#### 4. Language as Culture

The relationship between language and culture is deeply rooted. Language is used to maintain and convey culture and cultural ties. Language is culture and we cannot promote African values and culture when we do not encourage the use of African languages in our schools. It is not expedient to promote the use of English language which is an embodiment of English culture to the detriment of African languages and culture.

Writing in African language then, is hugely important to resist neo-colonialism. But only if that writing is also coupled with carrying the content of our people's anti-imperialist struggles to liberate their productive forces from foreign control. Ngugi has described Language, culture as, to quote:

If people lose their language, they lose the most important instrument in the definition and production own culture. This means to say that they are defined, or define themselves, a European memory and, in the process, their own memory becomes barred. that when we lose our language we can try to create a sense of identity language into which we were incorporated but obviously we are still territory defined by the language of our adoption.<sup>49</sup>

He also said that Language is no longer different from culture "*Language as culture is the collective memory bank of people's experience in history.*"<sup>50</sup> .Culture is the basis of people's identity.

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<sup>49</sup>Ângela Lamas Rodrigues and Ngugi wa Thiong'o, " An Interview with Ngugi wa Thiong'o," *Indiana University Press* Vol. 35, N.3 (Autumn, 2004), pp. 161-167, p. 162

<sup>50</sup> *Decolonizing the Mind*, p. 289.

#### 4. 1. Decolonizing the Tongue

Ngugi wa Thiong'o famously began his writing career writing in English publishing under the name James Ngugi. He had considerable success, but eventually turned to writing in his mother tongue, Gikuyu. Ngugi is among a handful of authors who have written successfully in more than one language. Samuel Beckett and Vladimir Nabokov are among the few others. but his reasons for doing so differ somewhat from those of other bilingual authors. *Decolonising the Mind* is both an explanation of how he came to write in Gikuyu, as well as an exhortation for African writers to embrace their native tongues in their art. As concrete examples, "he cites the intrinsic music and harmony of his own native Gikuyu,"<sup>51</sup> which as all languages "have a unique means of communication and specific ways of carrying culture, which define moral, ethical, and aesthetic values."<sup>52</sup> Therefore, Thiong'o claims :

A specific culture is not transmitted through language in its universality but in its particularity as the language of a specific community with a specific history. Written literature and orature are the main means by which a particular language transmits the images of the world contained in the culture it carries.<sup>53</sup>

The foreign languages most African authors write in are the languages of the imperialists English, French, and Portuguese that were relatively recently imposed on them. In addition, "the language of the coloniser is often a truly foreign one: segments of society understand it badly,"<sup>54</sup> if at all, and so certain audiences can not be reached by works in these imposed languages. The validity of some of these points has, however, diminished over the past decades, as literacy has spread and French, Portuguese, and especially English have established themselves as *Lingua Franca* across much of the continent.

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<sup>51</sup>William w Megenney, " The Use of Language in Afro-Caribbean and Neo- African Literature, " p. 53.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *The language of African literature in: P. Williams and L. Chrisman, Eds, Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 441.

<sup>54</sup>William w Megenney, " The Use of Language in Afro-Caribbean and Neo- African Literature, "p. 53.

Ngugi rightly complains that an educational focus that embraced essentially only foreign works ; not only foreign in language, but also in culture was destructive. He adds, “*the mind from the body so that they are occupying two unrelated linguistic spheres in the same person.*”<sup>55</sup> “*Such literary expressions in ones own language will obviate any complexes about that language, ones own psyche or ones environment.*”<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, Ngugi still keeping that writing in the native language helps the origin people to express their thoughts in their mother tongue, since Ngugi “*believes that his writing in the Gikuyu language, a Kenyan language , an African language, is part and parcel of the anti-imperialist struggles of Kenyan and African peoples.*”<sup>57</sup>

#### **4. 2. The Subversion of the African Mind<sup>58</sup>**

This paper tackles the mental subversion effected upon Africans ; as an example Ngugi’s colonial education. who was exposed to such kind of colonialization ...by the higher educational system in the late –colonial East Africa and this impact remained imprinted on him in sort of neo- colonialist as he called it. “*One of the humiliating experiences was to be caught speaking Gikuyu in the vicinity of the school .The culprit was given corporal punishment— three to five strocks of the cane on bare buttocks or was made to carry mental plate around the neck with inscriptions such as I AM STUPID or I AM A DONKEY .*”<sup>59</sup>

Ngugi's primary education in a Gikuyu Independent school gave him an awareness of colonialism as oppressive force which pushed him to attack and resist the colonial mind with much greater encouragement to write creatively. The colonial system was fooling policy of

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<sup>55</sup>Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *The language of African literature in: P. Williams and L. Chrisman, Eds, Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*, p.451.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 452.

<sup>57</sup> *Decolonizing the Mind*, p.290

<sup>58</sup> Carol Sicherman, "Ngugi's Colonial Education: The Subversion of the African Mind, " *Cambridge University Press* Vol. 38, N. 3 (Dec., 1995).

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 288.

assimilating Africans to their white vase through cultural imperialism and thus Africans suffered from double consciousness and identity crisis “*Thus language and literature were taking us further and further from ourselves to other selves ,from our world to other worlds.*”<sup>60</sup>

### 4. 3. Oral Tradition

The Use of elements of the **Oral Tradition** in reinforcing written literature is usually thing in the African literary scene. This style has, however, been given much concern due to the renewed interest in African writers to express themselves on issues which are linked to the black continent instead of writing on universal themes as some critics and writers would want them to do.

Writers such as Chinua Achebe in *Things Fall Apart*, Ayi Kwei Armah in *The Healers*, Ngugi wa thiong'o' in *Petals of Blood*, used several forms of the oral arts such as : **Proverbs** “*that wealth is sweat on one's hands*”<sup>61</sup> which conveys the belief of the rural dwellers in hard work. In addition to ' **Songs**' and others too like myths and the ritual art;

Father, mother  
 Provide me with pen and state  
 I want to learn  
 Land is gone  
 Cattle and sheep are not there  
 Not there anymore... to learn.<sup>62</sup>

Go with Nderi!  
 Grow rich with Nderi!

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<sup>60</sup> *Decolonizing the Mind*, p.288.

<sup>61</sup> *Petals of Blood*, p.180.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

Develop and fly high with Nderi!  
 Drive on new roads with Nderi!  
 Nearer my God to Thee,  
 Nearer to meeeeeeeee,  
 Even though I be a sinner<sup>63</sup>

## 5. The Syndromes of Hybridity (Homi Bhabha)

Homi Bhabha is one of the most important figures in contemporary post-colonial studies, and has developed a number of the field's neologisms and key concepts such as hybridity, mimicry, difference, and ambivalence. Such terms describe ways in which colonised people have resisted the power of the coloniser according to Bhabha's theory.

Likewise, one of his central ideas is that of **Hybridity** or "*Hybridisation*,"<sup>64</sup> which taking up from Edward Said's work, describes the emergence of new cultural forms from multiculturalism. Instead of seeing colonialism as something locked in the past, Bhabha shows how its histories language and culture constantly intrude in the present, demanding that we transform our understanding of cross-cultural relations, he shows how the African writers divorced their ethnic cultures and heritage writings copying the coloniser and according to him "*those who do write in English suffer from different kinds of discrimination. Even when born into the English language they are seen as being at a disadvantage: they write well for foreigners.*"<sup>65</sup>

Bhabha's work transformed the study of colonialism by applying post-structuralist methodologies to colonial texts. Also, Frantz Fanon agrees that the writers who inaugurate the

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<sup>63</sup>Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Petals of Blood*, p. 121.

<sup>64</sup>Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* Translated. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p.358.

<sup>65</sup>Homi K. Bhabha, *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), p.113.

advantageous creative revolutionary cultural reciprocity are internuncio people. He endures a hybrid identity. Hence, he depends on the national text of his culture to construct their culture. According to Bhabha “*hybridity is the most common and effective form of subversive opposition since it displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination.*”<sup>66</sup>

Another syndrome comes which is **Ambivalence**, this sees culture as consisting of opposing perceptions. Bhabha claims that this ambivalence ; this “*duality*”<sup>67</sup> presents a split in the identity of the colonised such has been shown in *Petals of Blood* as a vital case ; other ; allows for beings who are a hybrid of their own cultural identity and the coloniser’s cultural identity. Ambivalence contributes to the reason why colonial power is characterised by its belatedness. Also, colonial signifiers of authority only acquire their meaning after the traumatic scenario of colonial difference, cultural or racial returns the eye of power of some archaic image or identity. Ngugi states:

Language as culture is the collective memory bank of a people’s experience in history. Culture is almost indistinguishable from the language that makes possible its genesis, growth, banking, articulation and indeed its transmission from one generation to the next.<sup>68</sup>

Paradoxically, however, such an image can neither be original by the virtue of the act of repetition that constructs it nor identical by virtue of the difference that defines it. Accordingly, the colonial presence remains ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference. This opens up the two

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<sup>66</sup>Bill Achcroft et al, *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (New York Routledge, 2003), p.9.

<sup>67</sup>Tony Bennet, *Outside Literature* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 42.

<sup>68</sup>Ngugi Wa Thiong’o. "The Language of African Literature. " Bill Achcroft et all. *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. London : Routledge, 1995. p. 289.

dimensions of colonial discourse that which characterised by invention and mastery and that of displacement and fantasy.

As well as, **the cultural difference, enunciation, and stereotype** has been presented in Bhabha's ideas as an alternative to cultural diversity. In cultural diversity, a culture is an object of imperial knowledge and pre-exists the knower while **cultural difference** sees culture as the point at which two or more cultures meet and it is also where most problems occur, discursively constructed rather pre-given, a process of enunciation of culture as knowledgeable . Enunciation is the act of utterance or expression of a culture that takes place in the third place. Since culture never pre-given, it must be uttered. It is through enunciation that cultural difference is discovered and recognised.

The **enunciation process** introduces a divide between the traditional stable system of reference and the negation of the certitude of culture in the articulation of new cultural, meanings, and strategies in the political present as a practice of domination or resistance. Therefore, cultural differences is a process of identification, while cultural diversity is comparative and categorised. Moreover, it is that possibility of difference and articulation that could signify of skin culture from the fixations of racial typology, however, the stereotype impedes the circulation and articulation of the signifier of race as anything other than that. An important aspect of colonial and post-colonial discourse is their dependence on the the concept of fixity. The stereotype creates an identity that stems as much from mastery and pleasure as it does from anxiety and defence of the dominant, for it is a form of multiple and contradictory beliefs in its recognition of difference and disavowal it.

Additionally, like Bhabha's hybridity concept, **mimicry**, this is a metonym of presence. **Mimicry** appears when members of a colonised society imitate and take on the culture of the colonisers. Lacan asserts, the effect of mimicry is camouflage...it is not a

question of harmonizing with the background. Colonial mimicry comes from the colonist's desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is, as Bhabha writes, almost the same, but not quite. Thus, mimicry is a sign of double articulation; a strategy which appropriates the "Other"<sup>69</sup> as it visualizes power. Furthermore, mimicry is the sign of the inappropriate, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, **intensifies surveillance**, and poses an imminent threat to both normalized knowledges and disciplinary powers.

In this way, mimicry gives the colonial subject a partial presence, as if the colonial is dependent for its representation within the authoritative discourse itself. Ironically, the colonists desire to emerge as authentic through mimicry—through the process of writing and repetition—through this partial representation. On the other hand, Bhabha does not interpret mimicry as narcissistic identification of the coloniser in which the colonised stops being a person without the coloniser present in his identity.

Bhabha sees mimicry as a double vision which in descolosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority. And it is a double vision that is a result of what he has described as the partial representation and recognition of the colonial object; the figures of a doubling, the part-objects of a metonymy of colonial desire which alienates the modality and normality of those dominant discourses in which they emerge as inappropriate colonial subjects. According to Frantz Fanon who sees that every colonized people—in other words, "every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with ... the culture of the

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<sup>69</sup>Ngugi wa Thiong'o, "The Myth of Tribe in African Politics," *Indiana University Press on behalf of the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research at Harvard University* N. 101 (2009), pp. 16-23; p. 17.

*mother country.*"<sup>70</sup> Also, he says that "*the colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards.*"<sup>71</sup>

The colonists' desire is inverted as the colonial appropriation now produces a partial vision of the coloniser's presence ; a gaze from the Other is the counterpart to the coloniser's gaze that shares the insight of genealogical gaze. Moreover, Albert Memmi was treating the laziness and the dirtiness of the coloniser in his book *The Colonised and Colonisers* showing that the coloniser imitates the colonised in everything.

Likewise, **The Third Space** is another concept of Homi Bhabha, in which it acts as an ambiguous area that develops when two or more individuals and cultures interact compare this to urbanist Edward W. Soja's conceptualization of third space. It challenges our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the originary past, kept alive in the national tradition of the people, Bhabha asserts concerning the third space that "*is a mode of articulation, a way of describing a productive, and not merely reflective, space that engenders new possibility. It is an interruptive, interrogative, and enunciative space of new forms of cultural meaning.*"<sup>72</sup>

This ambivalent area of discourse, which serves as a site for the discursive conditions of enunciation, displaces the narrative of the Western written in homogeneous, serial time . It does so through the « disruptive temporality of enunciation. Bhabha sees that cultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory. As a result, the hierarchical claims to the innate originality or purity of cultures are invalid.

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<sup>70</sup>Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*. Translated by Charles Lam Markmann. (London: Pluto Press, 1963), p.9

<sup>71</sup>Ibid.

<sup>72</sup>Paul Meredith, "Hybridity in the Third Space; Rethinking Bi-cultural Politics in Aotearoa/New Zealand,"*Maori Research and Development conference*, (7-9 July 1998); pp 1-7; p.3.

In *Petals of Blood*, Ngugi shows the anxiety about hybridity's imagined threat to cultural purity and integrity. through the transformation of a village, Ilmorog into a proto-capitalist society with the problems of prostitution, social inequalities, misery, uncertainty and inadequate housing. The capitalist social system with its associated.

Class struggles fundamentally influences the social, cultural, philosophical, economical and political ideals of the society Bhabha contends that a new hybrid identity or subject-position emerges from the interweaving of elements of the coloniser and colonised challenging the validity and authenticity of any essentialist cultural identity which is very obviously seen in the fragmented identity of New Ilmorogs , there were several Ilmorogs. One was the residential area of the farm managers, County Council officials, public service officers the managers of Barclays, Standard and African Economic Banks, and other servants of state and money power.

To come with a conclusion, This issue of languages raises several polemical questions for consideration in the concern of literary texts, many questions raised concerning the issue abovementioned including, does the author choose to work in a local language or vernacular or indigenous language such as Gikuyu and Swahili languages or a major European one which is English language. All in all, Ngugi politics of language has been controversially received by his critics, who tend to either overemphasize his revolutionary trajectory as an African writer or devalue his efforts to produce an African-language-based literature. Through historical and cultural analysis, the present work offers an alternative view of Ngugi's treatments of the language question as a problematic, yet necessary, attempt to interrogate and alter his cultural alignments with European colonialism.

## CHAPTER TWO: LANGUAGE AS A POLITICAL MEDIUM AND CULTURAL MARKER

As a writer who believes in the utilization of African ideas, African philosophy and African folklore and imagery to the fullest extent possible, I am of the opinion the only way to use them effectively is to translate them almost literally from the African language native to the writer into whatever European language he is using as medium of expression. I have endeavoured in my words to keep as close as possible to the vernacular expressions. For, from a word, a group of words, a sentence and even a name in any African language, one can glean the social norms, attitudes and values of a people. In order to capture the vivid images of African speech, I had to eschew the habit of expressing my thoughts first in English. It was difficult at first, but I had to learn. I had to study each expression I used and to discover the probable situation in which it was used in order to bring out the nearest meaning in English. I found it a fascinating exercise.

Gabriel Okara, *African Speech...English Words*,  
 Transition 10 (London: Heinemann, 1963), p. 15.

The European languages in Africa are unquestionably part of the European imperial intrusion into Africa, they paradoxically act as a unifying force in many of the African national territories. This is because these languages possess the uniqueness of being *lingua franca* in many of the African countries. This is the real conundrum of these languages in African cultural history. These European languages are simultaneously political forces of unification among us while at the same time they are cultural instruments of domination on us.

It is probably here perhaps that seems to lie the historical unresolvability of this complicated problem of language in Africa. But this has been worsened by the seemingly impossibility of many African countries to choose an African language (s) as a national

language within a context of the multiplicity of languages. This inability is governed by the fear that in choosing one language over others, Bhabha states :

Those who do write in English suffer from different kinds of discrimination. Even when born into the English language they are seen as being at a disadvantage: they write well for foreigners.<sup>73</sup>

That politics as well as culture underpin the language issue in Africa. One thing has been clear through all this complicated process is that the persistence of the dominance of the European languages has had a deleterious effect on African cultural systems. Could it be that the absence of original African philosophical systems in modern times is tied to the fact that we use languages foreign to our thinking patterns or logical procedures, to quote ; Bill Achcroft :

Through the natives' strange questions it is possible to see, with historical hindsight, what they resisted in questioning the presence of the English—as religious mediation and as cultural and linguistic medium.... To the extent to which discourse is a form of defensive warfare, then mimicry marks those moments of civil disobedience within the discipline of civility: signs of spectacular resistance. When the words of the master become the site of hybridity—the warlike sig of the native—then we may not only read between the lines, but even seek to change the often coercive reality that they so lucidly contain.<sup>74</sup>

What is the relationship between language and philosophy! here the German language is suitable example. Could it be doubted that whilst the genius of Wole Soyinka enhances the greatness of the English language, the Yoruba language is fading suffering from lack of constant use. What is to be done? Is Ngugi's accomplishments paved way out of the puzzling issue in which we in Africa find ourselves? To conclude, it is important to reflect on the extraordinary Ngugi wa Thiongo. His work on the question of language within cultural platforme has undergone a recent revolutionary transformation.

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<sup>73</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), p.113.

<sup>74</sup> Quoted in: Bill Achcroft et al, *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2003), p.42.

This chapter discusses Ngugi wa Thiong'o politics of language in *Petals of Blood* along with the use of new literary didactic techniques. Ngugi has demonstrated that English and to some extent Gikuyu languages have been used to propagate domination of the masses by the elite in both colonial and post colonial Kenya.

Kenyans never became too educated to do menial jobs, consequently providing a stimulus for them learn it since they already knew that it was a prerequisite for white collar jobs and the high social class in society. It has also been demonstrated how English was promoted. Ngugi has shown how English learning was controlled in the colonial era to ensure that after the second World War at the expense of African languages, mainly to check African nationalism which had risen tremendously in the struggle for independence and thus has been shown by Ngugi wa Thiong'o in *Petals of Blood*.

## **1. The Allegorical Function of the Title**

Ngugi wa Thiong'o uses symbolism to name his novel. He chooses the expression *Petals of Blood* to introduce a Cartesian notion of nature based on Munira's European formal education and his organic view to nature. Likewise, *Petals of Blood* metaphorically refers to the violence consecrated in a postcolonial Kenya that only pointlessly tries to return to a past forever lost. Besides, the image of the bleeding flower is an image of the corruption and the devastation of nature as a result of deforestation and the construction of Trans-Africa highway.

### **1.1. Symbolism of *Petals of Blood***

When Munira hears from his pupil that the color of a certain flower resembles the color of blood, he replies that:

There is no colour called blood. What you mean is that it is red. You see? You must learn the names of the seven colours of the rainbow. Flowers are of different kinds,

different colours. Now I want each one of you to pick a flower ... count the number of petals and pistils and show me its pollen.<sup>75</sup>

Munira, however, enjoys his work and experience as a teacher. After all, he is not a total failure, as his father thinks, since he contributes so much to the society by giving education to impoverished children of Ilmorog. He teaches them the names of the parts of flower, “*the stigma, the pistil, pollen, the petals.*”<sup>76</sup> It is while Munira is teaching the children about fertilization that a child cries out, “*Look. A flower with Petals of Blood*”<sup>77</sup> referring to a solitary red bean flower in a field dominated by white, blue and violet flower.

the precepts of Vegetal Anatomy.

A sensorial perception of the flower is thus changed into a rational analysis that separates subject and object. The passage introduces a Cartesian notion of nature based on Munira's European formal education. The organic view of the natural world present in the student's comment, which relates the color of the flower and his own blood, is demurred and replaced by a concept of the plant as an object of analysis, minutely categorised by the student's question disturbs the teacher precisely for extrapolating the limits of such rationality. After all, Munira recognises that, for years, he has been reproducing an unreflecting model of teaching, some ready-made stuff, which works well inasmuch as he is not “*dragged into ... an area of darkness ... unknown, unknowable ... like the flowers with Petals of Blood.*”<sup>78</sup>

Munira can be seen, in fact, as an individual who has been alienated by the scientific discourses of colonialist modernity and who attempts to find in objective knowledge an escape for the fear of what he cannot entirely apprehend and dominate. Adorno and Horkheimer's problematisation of the concept of **Enlightenment** is useful here. For the

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<sup>75</sup> Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Petals of Blood*, p. 21.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, p. 24.

authors, the attempt to overcome mythical world views through a violent process of rationalisation, impoverished and reified man's ability to think and relate to the world surrounding them, which became a mere object of speculation and experimentation. They also affirm that the rationalisation of all domains of life comes as a solution to men's insecurity and fear of the unknown.

Therefore, "*nothing is allowed to remain outside, since the mere idea of the outside is the real source of fear,*"<sup>79</sup> scientific knowledge being the ultimate path towards the end of mythologies, mysteries and superstitions. The major result, nevertheless, is a triumphant calamity, stated in the epigraph to this essay, which reveals the actual entrapment of those governed by the new paradigm.

### **1.2. *Petals of Blood* as an Utopian Motif**

The phrase *Petals of Blood* appears a few times in the novel, but it is the epigraph that seems to set the tone for the understanding of its weight:

Fearful, original sinuosities! Each mangrove sapling  
 Serpentlike, its roots obscene  
 As a six-fingered hand,  
 Conceals within its clutch the mossbacked toad,  
 Toadstools, the potent ginger-lily,  
 Petals of blood,  
 The speckled vulva of the tiger-orchid;  
 Outlandish phallos  
 Haunting the travellers of its one road<sup>80</sup>

Nature is treated in the poem as an entity which is incorruptible in its manifestations, capable of seducing and terrifying — a powerful, indomitable and attractive nature, into which the traveler, frightened and excited, loses her/himself. Returning to Foucault, nature is depicted in the poem. As something which cannot be dominated by knowledge.

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<sup>79</sup> *Petals of Blood*, p 11.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 333.

In other words, nature is here a phenomenon that will not let itself be known or possessed. Munira's flower, on the other hand, with its pollens, pistils and petals, a representation of a nature that has been chained and impoverished by **Enlightenment**, sadly contrasts with Walcott's. If the commodification of the environment appears as one of the most shocking consequences of colonialism and neo-colonialism in the novel, the expression *Petals of Blood* points, alternatively, to that which cannot be colonised, i.e. to that which somehow resists the capitalist mode of production and modernity's scientism.

From this perspective, although the novel presents a reality horribly modified by the arrival of the coloniser, the title signals a possible lay-out or at least, to an indeterminate future founded on the symbolic forces of the present.

## 2. Which Language for African Literature?

Consequently, mimicry is the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which "appropriates" the Other; mimicry also, however, constructs and depends upon a system of differences (or differentiations between colonizer and colonized) which poses an immanent threat to both "normalized" knowledge and disciplinary powers.

Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 35.

The question we set out to answer in the present paper remains **Which language(s) for African literature?** After examining various language-planning options available to the continent at various levels, we may safely advance the following answer: any or all of the various languages in use on the continent and with which the African themselves can identify at some or all levels. The writer may thus choose to use an indigenous African language to address fellow Africans who speak and identify with that language, because it is the language of their childhood, of their dreams and their ancestors. But the writer's immediate audience

will be fairly limited in many cases, considering the extent of home- language diversity in many parts of the continent. In this respect, Joe Ushie clarifies:

Initially, African literature was a tool for celebrating the heroic grandeur of the African past; later it was used for anti-colonial struggle. Presently, it is being employed as a veritable weapon for depicting the postindependence disillusionment in Africa.<sup>81</sup>

Should the writer wish to reach a wider African audience, he/ she would have to choose as a vehicle a language of African origin that he/ she shares with the proposed audience. In the absence of such a vehicular language, he/ she should have the possibility of choosing one of the fairly widely shared languages European origin which many African states have adopted and are using for a fairly wide range of communicative purposes.

In *Petals of Blood*, the writer also teaches the people that in the struggle against imperialism, the unity of every citizen of the country is mandatory, and they should also take side because it does not benefit a country if one oscillates here and there like a leaf on water.

These adopted languages in many cases have come to stay, and more and more Africans are beginning to identify with them. At least as far as certain spheres of their existence are concerned: education, employment, business, administration, interethnic communication.

Besides, as Towa observes, there are whole generations of young Africans to whom these adopted languages are the only viable means of communication. We may term them

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<sup>81</sup> Joe Ushie, *A Reign of Locusts* (Ibdan: Kroftbooks. Journal of African Studies, 2004), p. 1.

**déracinés** but they remain Africans whom the literary artist must also strive to reach. And if the African writer ever to wished to share his/her African experience with a non-African audience, his/ her adopted languages of European origin, already widely shared at the world level, would be a viable means of self-expression.

In Ngugi wa Thiong'o's terms, works produced in these adopted languages would be part of hybrid tradition, "*a tradition in transition, a minority tradition that can only be termed as Afro-European literature, that is, literature written by Africans in European languages.*"<sup>82</sup>

Admittedly, we are in the presence of a hybrid tradition, but that is nothing to be ashamed of or surprised about. Hybridisation is one of the salient features of today's African personality and identity. Almost all social strata have been touched in varying degrees by this phenomenon, which by the way does not spare any human society. Besides, the dynamism of human societies makes each period look like a transition leading to the next. And as for the suggestion that this tradition is a minority tradition, it appears quite reasonable.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o's commits himself to a mode of a cultural nationalism in which culture is interpreted in its actual terms. Therefore, the artistic traditional modes are manipulated to serve as anti-colonial means and to regain pride and confidence in the indigenous culture. National culture expresses itself in myth, orally-based history, songs, dances, poetry. The local belief of the people town, which is a part of broad traditions, is highlighted orally by the elderly in the town:

The older folk told stories of how Rain, Sun and wind went a-wooing Earth, Sister of Moon, and it was Rain who carried the day, and that was why Earth grew swollen belly after being touched by Rain. Others said no, the

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<sup>82</sup> Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *I Write in Gikuyu* (in the Courier, op. Cit, 1990), p. 73.

raindrops were really the sperms of God and that even  
 human beings sprang from the womb<sup>83</sup>

But what does not appear to be reasonable in Ngugi's statement is the suggestion that because Africans produce literature in European language it is not African literature. The people of Ilmorog argue, "*Look at the white people: first took our land; then our youth, only later, cows and sheep.*"<sup>84</sup> The image of the colonized land is so central in the novel. Ngugi sets the ordeal of the raped land to interpret the sense of loss in the consciousness of the nation. Losing the land has consequently repressed the nation's The colonizer has raped the land; suppressed and exploited the natives. The real owners turn into only laborers in their real land. In this way, the natives lose that sense of belongingness as they have been physically estranged out their land, "some of the herdsmen and peasants were turned into kipande-carrying labourers on lands that used to be their own to master and to rule."<sup>85</sup> Thus, the land is no longer productive and meaningful in their terms. As a result of this bitter fact, the peasants rather set fire on the land, which once belonged to them, than being taken by a foreigner, "*At night, on Ilmorog ridge, their leaders met and reached a decision. They set fire to the whole field and themselves ran to the outer edges of the plains, waiting for deadly repercussion.*"<sup>86</sup>

To begin with, our knowledge of linguistic history tells us that is often easier to determine the origin of languages than to predict their final destination. Is not the English language today the native tongue not only of the English, but also of most Americans, Australians and New Zealanders? Did not this same English, barely some sixteen hundred years ago, exist in the form of dialects spoken by Germanic tribes known to us as Angles,

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<sup>83</sup> *Petals of Blood*, p. 22.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p.294.

Saxons and Jutes? Must we today term American, Canadian and Australian literatures hybrid literatures? African literature as a written tradition is still very young and in the very process of self-determination. Nothing stops us from attempting like Ngugi wa Thiong'o and others, to give direction to it. But our wishes will remain wishes unless they rhyme with the various forces at play.

These forces are many and complex; they are political, social, economic and cultural. Incidentally, in spite of his insistence on the use of African languages for African literature, Ngugi affirms that African history is not a blank page as the colonial construct designates but it is rich with heritage and moral construct.

This can bring confidence to the masses and restore an identity which the colonizer attempts to erase and curb its idiosyncrasy and presence in the worldly context. Abudlla explains that Africa is one of the richest continents with finite possibilities for renewal and growth is a fact.<sup>87</sup>

Ngugi wa Thiong'o somewhere admits that the content of literature also determines its character content with which the people could identify or which would force them to take side. Content is ultimately the arbiter of former. Content such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o describes in this passage could thus constitute the unifying factor in African literature.

This would somehow liberate the African literary artist who would be free to choose not only the specific African issues to address, and “*it was meant to make us accept our inferiority so as to accept their superiority and rule over us*”<sup>88</sup> but also the audience with whom to communicate and the language or languages in which to exercise his craft. And thus

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<sup>87</sup> *Petals of Blood*, p. 294.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p.197.

the longstanding controversy over the language of literature and Africa would be said to be laid to rest, at least for a while.

### 3. The Language Controversy

Ndemi: he fashioned a tool with which he cut some of the trees and cleared the undergrowth. The beast of the earth with their forked tongues spat out poison at him...he had made the earth yield to the touch of his fingers and the wisdom of his head, and he now had more wealth in cows and goats on top of his numerous crops.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Petals of Blood* (London : Heinmann,1977), p. 146

The local legendary is associated with the glorious past of the nation, the African race and historiography. Karega, while converses with Wanja, exposes the place of the legend in the cultural belief and its national associations:

...I was thinking about Nyakinyua's story.  
 About Ndemi?  
 Yes.  
 Why. Do you believe in it?  
 It must be true. Why not? If not the details, then at least the idea What idea?  
 Of a past. A great past. A past when Ilmorog, or all African, controlled its own.<sup>89</sup>

Furthermore, Nyakinyua, the old rational woman, plays a pivotal role in embodying the national heritage of the nation. Her presence in the narrative is highly connotative as she expresses the Kenyan traditional identity. Nyakinyua symbolically demonstrates the motherly love of the land, which is as old as history. Her narration of traditional and colonial history stories evokes a sense of postcolonial resistance in the narrative and contributes to the richness of the postcolonial Kenyan historiography. She leads the traditional performances such as songs and dances which the novelist deliberately incorporates in the narrative:

She sang of other, struggles of other wars—the arrival of colonialism and the fierce struggles waged against it by

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<sup>89</sup> *Petals of Blood*, p. 151.

newly circumcised youth. Yes, it was always the duty of the youth to fight all the Marimus, all two-mouthed Orges, and that was the meaning of bloodshed at circumcision. She stopped at the dramatic call and challenge. Then the women applauded with four ululations. Nyakinyua had made them relive their history.<sup>90</sup>

Through Nyakinyua's voice, Ngugi proudly mingles the present with the voice of the past, "*The old woman, strong sinews forged by earth and sun and rain, was the link binding past and present and future.*"<sup>91</sup> She talks with dignity and pride of her dead husband who was a fierce fighter of the colonialism. While she is on deathbed, she recalls the bravery of the struggle against colonialism, which evocatively tells of the nation struggle history:

I'll never forget the hour ...he dropped the jembe and pulled the secret from under his blanket and pointed it at Waitina trembled, we saw a white man tremble, and we all waited for the bang ...You should have been there...I was proud, soproud, I would now lift my head among other women...Well ... It did not fire...It was too old ... He pulled and pulled...well they caught him and hanged him...but he never uttered a word of 'sorry' or cry for forgiveness... He was a man, my man... he was a man! She died of the same night...and I shall never forget her words of pride and joy...I am coming to join you, my warrior....<sup>92</sup>

Ngugi regularly in the narrative evokes the cultural image of the African race and national identity which negates the colonial representation. He celebrates race, nation, remarkable history of resistance and love of land. Through this manipulation of the cultural image, Ngugi affirms that African history is not a blank page as the colonial construct designates but it is rich with heritage and moral construct. This can bring confidence to the masses and restore an identity which the colonizer attempts to erase and curb its idiosyncrasy and presence in the worldly context. Abudlla said:

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<sup>90</sup> *Petals of Blood*, p. 250.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 252.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 386.

That Africa is one of the richest continents with finite possibilities for renewal and growth is a fact....That our people fought against the Arab slave traders is a fact: that the Akamba people built formidable defences against them even while trading with them in ivory is a fact. That our people resisted European intrusion is a fact: we fought inch by inch, ridge by ridge, and it was only through the superiority of their arms and traitorous actions of some of us that we were defeated. That Kenyan people have had a history of fighting and resistance is therefore a fact.<sup>93</sup>

The controversy over which language or languages African writers should or may use in producing their literary works has often been presented as involving two opposing camps: a camp for indigenous African languages and against foreign (European) languages; led particularly by Ngugi wa Thiong'o. And a camp largely in favor of adopted European languages, led by Chinua Achebe. Hence, a clear examination of the views of the various writers and critics reveals that they are not really dichotomous.

#### **4. The Aesthetics of *Gikuyu*: The Cultural Heritage and the Didactic Style**

*Petals of Blood* is one of the most important contemporary literary works in the African literature. It serves as enlightening literary text for the African people mainly and as a resembling of the richness and originality of the Kenyan culture for the non-native readers.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o stands out as a guardian of the African culture and literature. He stands as the foremost contemporary Native Kenyan ethnographer. In fact, Ngugi in his novel depicts a world torn apart by social and cultural destruction which leads the inhabitants of Ilmorog to a kind of psychological confusion and double-consciousness, but it also presents his vital role to remind the African majority with their belonging through his motivated writings about the black continent as it is. Along with this, the novel reveals a

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<sup>93</sup> *Petals of Blood*, p. 294.

society full of betrayals by the bourgeoisie; Ngugi aims to awake the revolutionary spirit among Kenyans similar to that of the Kenya land and freedom army the Mau Mau.

*Petals of Blood* becomes a powerful symbol of hope that Ilmorog, a microcosm of postcolonial Africa, still hides its mysteries and haunts. Paraphrastically, the optimistic protagonist Munira was seen as the maker of modern Kenya. Ngugi also shows the physical and the spiritual changes that has transformed the village of Ilmorog from a small cluster of mud huts to a bustling new town of stone, iron, concrete and glass and neo lights.

Ngugi amalgamates the local culture with esthetic genres such as frame stories, poems to save the Native's culture and language along with contrasting the colonizer. The most important Native heritage Ngugi uses in his works is the oral traditions such as myths, storytelling, songs, proverbs and jokes. His works indicates his recognition about contending his language; Gikuyu. Hence, his works reflect the mysterious nature of the Native language.

In *petals of Blood*, Ngugi uses the ancestral traditions through telling their stories and myths to spread their cultural heritage to heal the Kenyan people from the syndromes of the white vase. Paraphrastically, it denotes the power of the word in the African culture.

#### **4.1. Orality: The Use of Folktales**

Foremost of human history, literature; both fiction and poetry has been narrated not written, heard not read. So, fairy tales, folk tales, stories from the oral tradition, are all of them the most vital connection we have with the imaginations of the ordinary the men and women whose labour created our world.

Angela carter, Angela Carter's Book of Fairy tales (United Kindom: Hachette, 2015), p. 10.

Among the strategic communal tools followed by Ngugi wa Thiong'o in writing *Petals of Blood* is telling stories and folk tales as a picture-language of soul and as a tradition

that dominated the continent from an Native African prespective focusing on all the aspects of the African heritage. Hence, including him and other writers who used this artistic expression to explore the mysteries of humanity and to keep the rooted culture alive. They are popular stories kept in peoples minds. Memories which are centuries old and testify to a core of truth handed down orally from generation to generation.

In the novel *Nyakinuya*; the old stubborn traditionalist who is the teller of variety of stories which embodies traditional values that go back to the village of Ilmorog and its community and tells glorious, happy and hard-working herdsmen and peasants.<sup>94</sup> As she narrates the events happening in the village:

Ilmorog, the scene of the unfolding of the unfolding of this drama, had not always been a small cluster of mud huts lived in by old men and women and children with occasional visits from wandering herdsmen. It has had its days of glory.<sup>95</sup>

Those stories recount the deeds of great heros and aim to entertain the audience as well as glorifying the blesses of the Kenyan soil and teach them precious morals specifically children whose primer education was from those stories.

#### **4.2. Songs as an Expressive Medium**

Since the African people are oral people, the use of songs was obvious in *Petals of Blood*. The language in this genre is highly stylized, and meter and rhythm are more important than conceptual coherence because in traditional society every word is charged with a particular force. It holds the values and the beliefs of the Kenyan community and helped the

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<sup>94</sup> Christophe Dailly, "The Coming of Age of The African Novel," *Présence Africaine Editions* Vol. 04, No. 130 (1984), pp. 118-131, p. 119.

<sup>95</sup> *Petals of Blood*, p. 120.

poor peasants to forget the misery of life in the village. As is mentioned in the novel; They sang in defiant tones and their one voice was like a roll of thunder.<sup>96</sup>

And you, traitors to your people,  
 Where will you run to  
 When the brave of the lands gather?  
 For Kenya is black people's country.<sup>97</sup>

Ngugi wa Thiong'o used this medium in his novel as unseparated part from the Kenyan culture to express morality and the simplicity of the lives of the African ordinary people as he mentioned in *Petals of Blood* Native cultural songs which have been sung by groups of male and female voices; to quote:

Waru wa ngirigaca  
 Red potatoes.  
 Uthigagirwko ku?  
 At whose place are they peeled?  
 Uthigagirwo kwa Ngina  
 They are peeled at Ngina's place.  
 Twetereire oe Kihinguro  
 We waiting for her to pick the key.  
 Ciana citu ciaragie Githungu  
 Our children speak English.  
 Harambee! Tuoe Madaraka  
 Harambee! We take up high offices.<sup>98</sup>

The Kenyan people took over and sang the juicy sections of songs normally sung at circumcision.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p.124.

<sup>97</sup> *Petals of Blood*, p.124.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

Ngwirwo ni utuku

They say it's dark.

Ngwirwo ni utuku

They say it's dark.

Ngionaga Irima

But I can still see.

Cia Tumutumu

Tumu Tumu hills.

Hui, Wainaga

Oh yes, Wainaga.

Njuguma nduku

A big club.

Njuguma nduku

A big club.

Ya gukura k—ru kabucu

For pulling out a jaw of cunt.

Hui, Wainaga

Oh yes, Wainaga.

K—na igoto

Cunt with banana leaves.

K—na igoto

Cunt with banana leaves.

Githi k—ni unyuaga mbaki

So cunt! you take snuff.

Hui, Wainaga

Oh yes, Wainaga.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p.130.

<sup>100</sup> *Petals of Blood*, p. 130.

## **5. *Petals of Blood* Conceptual Analysis**

Despite the ravages of the British rule to the Kenyan masses in Africa, Ngugi through his language and his powerful words defined the reaction of the people against the colonial oppression. This oppression depicted above is intensified by the declaration of a state of emergency over Kenya by describing the Mau Mau War, taking the lands of the poor, exploiting their women sexually also colonised their ears, their tongues, their minds and even their heritage ethnicity. Here, Ngugi portrays the Kenyan people as living up to their words as depicted in the above except using his pen and his language to make his voice heard.

### **5.1. Alienation of the Land**

After decades of colonial rule many of the poorer in the Kenyan society have been alienated from their lands. Ngugi wa Thiong'o indicates that Fiction should embody the aspirations and the hopes of the majority, peasants and workers so the main concern in *Petals of Blood* was to draw attention to the plight to dispossessed peoples of Ilmorog and by extension of Kenya. Likewise, the hope of the masses lies in the continuing struggle in order to restore what already belongs to them.<sup>101</sup> As Karega states :

Land ? There was no land. He was born in a landless house. But even those with land — how long could it continue to be subdivided into plots and subplots that each son could own a piece ? Why, anyway, should soil, any soil, which after all was what was Kenya, be owned by an individual ? Kenya, the soil, was the people's common shamba and there was no way it could be right for a few, or a section, or a single nationality, to inherit for their sole use what was communal.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Christophe Dailly, "The Coming of Age of The African Novel," p. 129.

<sup>102</sup> *Petals of Blood*, p. 302.

Obviously, the land had a spiritual value for the people of Ilmorog. Unfortunately the richness of thier lands were taken by the oppressor; Karega in his conversation with Wanja said that:

No, we want a world, we must struggle for a world in which the wealth of our land shall belong to us all (...) in which we shall all be workers for one another's happiness and well being.<sup>103</sup>

## 5.2. Education as a Mark of Modernisation in Ilmorog

The protagonist Munira took the responsibility of teaching the children in the village usig his experience in Siriana High School . He thought that pupils should be given simple facts then pass exams “*Listen, you have shown more than average diligence and even intelligence by attending this meeting.*”<sup>104</sup>

## 5.3. Critique of Capitalism

Mzigo’s office was a specklessly clean affair with a tray for incoming mail, a tray for outgoing mail and one for miscellaneous mail plus numerous pens and pencils beside each of the three enormous inkwells. On the wall hung a map of Chiri District with the location of the various schools marked in with drawing-pins.

Ngugi wa Thiong’o, *Petals of Blood* (London : Heinmann, 1977), p. 25.

As economic system in which means of producing wealth are privately owned. In the novel Ngugi denounce such system that has created unequal classes of rich and poor by dramatizing its effects on the people of Ilmorog. The capitalists in the story were Kimeria, Chui, Mzigo who exploited the workers and gave them low wages. Also they take from the villagers the recipie of the traditional alcoholic brew and made a fortune from selling it.

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<sup>103</sup>*Petals of Blood*, p. 327.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

#### 5.4. The Struggle for Independence

The struggle was presented in the Mau Mau rebel and the heroic deeds of freedom fighters such Mutung'u who gave up his life to achieve independence, also the village elder nyakinyua recounts her husband's exploits and his proud refusal to be humiliated by the British. To quote :

the raising of the flag—our flag. It is of three colours, rightly sang the poet: Green is our land; Black is black people; and Red is our blood.<sup>105</sup>

#### 6. The Role of Woman: Wanja the Wounded Bird

Oppression is one of the persistent issues in the novel with its types : social, political, economical, racial, and sexual. The colonial and neo-colonial rulers oppressed and prevented ordinary Kenyans from reaching their potential. Wanja was sexually exploited. “*He called me into his house and talked love and said he wanted me and would I?*”<sup>106</sup> And she continues “*I refused and he confronted me with his knowledge. Either I let him, or I would face my angry parents.*”<sup>107</sup>

It can be said that the female character was symbolized in Wanja. This latter had a strong relationship with land, her ability as a mother and her ability to forge her own destiny. Although, her final turn was prostitution. As Govin Narain Sharma suggests, Wanja “*is the spirit and earth of Kenya humiliated, exploited and ill-used*”<sup>108</sup> To quote :

Thus Ngugi celebrates Wanja as a symbol of modern woman's liberation and active strength, of which we have ample evidence throughout the book, while he stigmatizes the prostitute, implied in Wanja's rejection by Karega, up to this point, Ngugi mouthpiece, in the final scenes of the novel. As Evans notes, Wanja's confrontation with Karega

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<sup>105</sup> *Petals of Blood*, p. 56.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> Govind Narain Sharma, *Ngugi's Apocalypse: Marxism, Christianity and African Utopianism in Petals of Blood* ( London : Hans Zel, 1990), p. 302.

is really a confrontation with herself, where she imagines the possibility of re-channeling her ambitions and strengths in a manner more consistent with Ngugi's choice of resistance<sup>109</sup>

## 7. Persecution of Language

Persecution of language is similar to Linguicism which is the unfair treatment of an individual based solely on his or her use of language including their native one. According to this definition usually the coloniser sees the language of the colonised as inferior. In the case of Kenya Ngugi's *petals of blood* which tackled the political betrayal of the national bourgeoisie who abandoned their mother tongue as a way of modernization and **fitting** in the white community and wanted to generalize this by pushing or precisely obliging the masses to use coloniser's language instead of their own and also, the coloniser who went to the building of schools which teach the English language as official one. This was resembled in George Orwell saying " *If thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought. A bad usage can spread by tradition and imitation even among people who should and do know better.* " <sup>110</sup>

Since Africa is the most multilingual continent in the world. African writers differed with regard to writing in their mother tongue or to employ colonial language in their literary products. As some of them sticking to their origins chose African languages and dialects which held all African values and cultural heritage more expressive and helped in enriching the African case. While others went to adapt foreign language which lacks any African flavor justifying it as an universal language that will help spread the voice of an oppressed Africa, among those who have chosen African languages we find Ngugi Wa Thiong'o' along with Ngugi wa Miri who have written a play in Gikuyu language called *Ngaahika Ndeenda*. Also

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<sup>109</sup> Evans Jennifer, "Mother Africa and the heroic Whore: Female Images in *Petals of Blood*, Contemporary African Literature. Ed. Hal Wylie, Eileen Julien, and J. Linnemann; with Sue Houchins and Marie Shelton. " (Washington : DC Continents, 1983), p. 57.

<sup>110</sup> George Orwell, Keith Gesen "All Art is Propaganda : Critical Essays"( Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009).p. 282.

Ngugi in his *petals* used Gikuyu language in sort of orature when he said “*The children sang a e i o u ĩ ũ in loud voices. They also sang: Kamau wa Njoroge ena ndutu kuguru: and thought of their own jiggers eating their toes and scratched them against the floor in earnest.*”<sup>111</sup>

## 8. The Writer in Colonial and Post Colonial State

The underlying words will treat the position of the African writers during colonial and post colonial periods mainly Ngugi wa Thiong'o'one of the Africa's greatest intellectuals who believed that primary aim of literature is not to entertain but to persuade. Centuries ago, Africa was a major target for colonial plunder and since Nigeria is one of its parts. It experienced European colonialism, at that time Ngugi wa Thiong'o'among of a lot used his pen to fight back the evil of the oppressor through his literary pieces such *Petals of Blood, A Grain of Wheat* and *Devil on the Cross* and many others. A freedom fighter who played a main role in raising the African consciousness and dedicated his gift and life for resisting the intruder who intended to wipe up all what is African. He also considered Neo-colonialism as **Betryal** and a way of manipulating people's minds so that they will adapt the coloniser's vase as it is superior to theirs. As Frantz Fanon said:

I am black; I am in total fusion with the world, in sympathetic affinity with the earth, losing my id in the heart of the cosmos -- and the white man, however intelligent he may be, is incapable of understanding Louis Armstrong or songs from the Congo. I am black, not because of a curse, but because my skin has been able to capture all the cosmic effluvia. I am truly a drop of sun under the earth. <sup>112</sup>

Likewise, his writings did not stop and continued also in the post colonial period where he launched a searching journey for identity. His books and essays aimed to **reconstruct** the African mind and spirit and cleaning the aftermath of the oppressor and to free

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<sup>111</sup> *Petals of Blood*, p. 21.

<sup>112</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (France :Edition Du Seuil, 1952 ), p. 27.

not only the lands but also the African culture. Among many other African writers such Chibua Achebe, Ayi Kwei Armah who participated in the resistance of colonialism. Ngugi take in charge the challenge of building a national character following a painful experience; he was put in prison but he continued writing in the African language as he was saying you jailed me because of my mother tongue and I will keep using it.

## **9. The Case for Linguistic Integration Based on Complementary Languages**

Tadadjeu makes a strong case for a policy of linguistic integration for Cameroon in particular and for Africa in general which requires that individuals acquire the use of at least two languages an African language which may be the user's mother tongue or any other language of his/ her choice, and at least one European language.

Tadadjeu proposes the acquisition of both English and French in addition to an indigenous language. Indeed, this Cameroonian linguist argues that both African and European languages can happily co-exist and function in a complementary manner. He assigns the functions of each group as follows:

Une fonction horizontale permattant à tous Camerounais - Africain- de communiquerr avec tout autre Camerounais(Africain), quelle que soient leurs origines respectives. Cette fonction est assumée par nos deux langues officielles(Européenes) et par les langues nationales(Africaines)véhiculaires .Une fonction verticale permattant à tout Camerunais(Africain) de s'intégrer dans sa communauté linguistique d'origine(ou de choix) et participer au développement culturel de cette communauté.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>113</sup>Maurice Tadadjeu, *Pour une Politique d'intégration Linguistique Camerounaise. Le Trilinguisme extensil,; in Identité Culturelle Camérounaise* ( Cameroon: Cameroun, 1985),p. 191.

Such an option, if given support regional, national and local levels, will enable Africans to preserve, develop and use, not only one or few of their numerous indigenous languages, but all of them. It has also the advantage of permitting us to keep the various other languages of European origin that give us access to the rest of the world. Besides, no language is imposed on any individual or group. Individuals and communities are simply guided to choose and learn the languages they need to take full control of their lives. In this respect, Tadadjeu's proposal provides a practical and a democratic solution to the language problem of many communities.

In this respect, the local Gikuyu culture has framed Nugget's literary production. Hence, *"the arrival of colonialism and the fierce struggles waged against it by newly circumcised youth."*<sup>114</sup> Thus, the loss of this cultural spirit and landscape under the feet of colonialism and neo-colonial modernism has awakened his literary production consciousness. Referring to the English teacher: *"And now I saw in the clear light of day the role that the Fraud shams of the colonial world played to create all of us black zombies dancing pornography in Blue Hills."*<sup>115</sup> Hence, he adds *"while our people are dying of hunger, while our people cannot afford decent schools for their children."*<sup>116</sup> Here, Ngugi has to compromise the essentiality of the cultural concern and he uses as an alien language as English to highlight the cultural identity of the nation. However, to achieve the cultural aim Ngugi has compelled the portrayal of the clashing notions of colonial and colonized cultures to identify and redeem the annihilated native culture.

To draw a conclusion, there is no simple answer to the choice of language, as both positions require the author to make certain sacrifices and prioritize what is most important to

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<sup>114</sup> *Petals of Blood*, p. 250

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p.198.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

them—a global or native audience. This half-century debate has been fast-forwarded and challenged with another option for contemporary African writers, which calls for an integration of the two—a language that embodies both ethnic cultures and the culture that has been imposed upon them since birth. Contemporary African writers have navigated through identity, linguistic, and stigma barriers, and whether they are writers of African literature by descent or by choice, they have been impacted by the language debate. Rather in English, Igbo, Gikuyu, Yoruba, they have all aided in the empowerment of their nations, by carrying their personal experiences and cultures—whether it be traditional, western, or hybrid—through African literature.

## Conclusion

Language and culture are elastic terms dependent on each other. Language is formed by culture, while culture is influenced and impacted by language. Hence, sociologists and linguists attempted to define these contested concepts. They sought to clarify each concept as a single segment along with trying to attest their propinquity and interdependency. The Language poses a considerable effect on the manner, people are professed and the extent of difference they are imparted.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o's selected novel, *Petals of Blood*, is a resistant literary text through which the writer tried to challenge the modern writers in Africa by writing in the Native language in the Post-Colonial literary context. Ngugi's narrative text celebrates the esthetic African language using the techniques involved integrating dialects, pidgin, or proverbs that would express their traditions and culture while still being accessible to a universal audience. *Petals of Blood*, the names of the characters along with the names of places where most of Munira's journey took place are, all, exospheric references for the indigenous cultural heritage and religious beliefs.

In this respect, the African kenyan novelist, Ngugi, adopted new stylistic narrative methods to portray the evil of cultural imperialism imposed by the coloniser, he used his art as a weapon to criticize the colonial regime in Kenya.

The first chapter of this study attempted to shed light on the socio-historical context and theoretical background of the novel. It discusses the Kenyan history before, during and after colonialism. As well as, it studied the issue of language and its politics in Africa. Likewise, it focuses on the choice of language and its use as vehicle to wash their brains from

the impact of the imperial language. Hence, he tackled oppressor's attempts to colonise their way of life, language, culture, traditions, self and tongue.

Moreover, the British government applied several policies to eradicate and erase the Native language of the Africans in order to expedite the process of the African Kenyan's assimilation into the mainstream British society. These policies aimed at killing the Native's sense of belong and honor those people have towards their language and history so that it will be easy to colonise their minds and tongues. They planted in their heads that English language is superior to theirs and that their Native tongue is degrading and old fashioned.

In addition, Ngugi's numerous attempts to speak about the African culture which embodies African values and people's anti-imperialist struggles to liberate their productive forces from foreign control. However, the black man is faced with the dilemma of defending himself in the oppressors' language and doing so results in additional problems. The black man must find ways to integrate his black origins in a language and address where blackness itself is at best a suitable figure. Furthermore, with language being the carrier of culture, in speaking the language of the oppressor, the black man also learns the history and culture of the West while simultaneously dismissing his own. Thus, self-definition comes with a return to the African black roots.

In the second chapter, we aimed at highlighting Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* attempt to compete and oppose the coloniser's oppression. These literary texts allegorized the space between the two worlds, the marginalized Kenyan society and the white one. On the light of Homi Bhabha's arguments and beliefs ; *Petals of Blood* is the third space, a space that resulted from the affiliation of the two cultures and the two languages in the contemporary modern world. In *Petals of Blood*, Ngugi wa Thiong'o wrote about the Native African heritage using his mother tongue Gikuyu language.

Indeed, Ngugi named his novel at first *Ballad of Bairmaid* then he changed to *Petals of Blood* to illustrate the importance of the African arts and manifestations of intellectual achievements regarded collectively since this metaphorical title is related to the spirituality of the land and the sacrifices of the peasants and the Mau Mau fighters to defend Kenya. Then, in the novel Ngugi relates the two symbols of flowering and blood to processes observable in post-independence Kenyan society these images of flowering and bloodshed are connected series of pictures through which Ngugi attempts to focus on the idea of revolution.

As well as, the image of the bleeding flower is an illustration of the damage and the devastation of nature as a result of deforestation and the construction of Trans-Africa highway. The choice of the ambiguous title exhibits an indeterminate future founded on the symbolic forces of the present.

Likewise, in the novel Ngugi was targeting the working class. He showed Munira as a symbol of rejection of the middle class who refused to fit within the Kenyan community. Hence, he showed peasants characters as guardians of traditions who were oppressed by the ruling elite and supposed to work together to change their situation and condition. Additionally, he provokes the have nots in Kenya to rise against the tyranny of the haves.

In addition, he used cultural and local references to address the working class; he used Gikuyu and Swahili terms as a proof that he made his people a primary audience only upper class could understand English language that is why he changed writing with Gikuyu language. Ngugi used various techniques such stories within stories and changing narration to achieve collective consciousness.

Besides, it is therefore clear that Ngugi used this work to present the history and the present reality of the Kenyan people in the form of an allegory that was constructed based on the collective struggle of the Ilmorog people to inspire consciousness among the Kenyan peasants and working class. *Petals of Blood* can be seen as an act of defiance and an attempt

to recapture the spirit of the past. The act symbolises, for the participants, a form of resistance to an imposed way of life in Kenya. Finally, we demonstrated how capitalism and betrayal can be an evil which negatively affected the culture, language, traditions and customs and ethnicity of certain discriminated country.

To conclude, Ngugi's novel offers the readers insights on the indigenous' sacred history and language. It inspects the exploitation and the psychological abuse of the Kenyans. *Petals of Blood* perpetuates the Native African language and demonstrates its significance in the modern world. Ngugi writes in such a way to oppose the coloniser's language and to assert the endurance of the African cultural heritage along with highlighting the paramountcy of the Native African language, land, and spiritual beliefs in healing the African wounded souls.

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## المخلص:

تتناول هذه الدراسة طبيعة استعمال اللغة في رواية (1979) تويجات الدم لنقوي وا ثيونغو. تثير الرواية تساؤلات حول طبيعة واستعمال اللغة على التوالي في كينيا خلال فترة ما بعد الاستعمار. تعطي هذه الدراسة وصف حقيقي لتطبيق اللغة بين طبقات المجتمع في كينيا. في هذا المسعى نصب اهتمامنا في الدور الادبي للغة وكيف اختار الروائي لغة القيكويو كأكثر لهجة معبرة. هذه الدراسة تقدم عرضا وافيا للطبقات التصويرية للغة وتوضح الاستراتيجيات الأسلوبية، واستخدامه لتقنيات كالتشويق الروائي، الأمثال، الأغاني واللغة المجازية للرد على هيمنة المستبد في هذه الحقبة. الأطروحة تفحص الرواية من كل الزوايا الأسلوبية والموضوعية، يتناول الفصل الأول السياق الاجتماعي التاريخي والخلفية النظرية للرواية حيث يسلط الضوء على سياسة اللغة والأحداث التي أحاطت بعملية كتابة هذه الرواية الأدبية، كما أنه يوفر رؤية عامة حول تحرير العقول. ومن ثم فإنه يبدأ بالتعامل مع الافكار الافتراضية المتجسدة في الرواية. الى جانب ذلك، في الفصل الثاني حاولنا فحص الطرق المستعملة من طرف الكتاب الأفرقة في فترة ما بعد الاستعمار كخطوة محفزة لترسيخ اللغة الأم. نحن ايضا نحاول ان نتخلص من الاضطهاد اللغوي الذي اقترحه نقوي عندما يتعلق الامر بإنتاج الكلمات الخطية مقترنا بالأدب الإفريقي. هذا الجزء يهدف الى فحص وتوضيح استراتيجية نقوي الأسلوبية.

**Key words:** Politics of Language, Decolonizing the Mind, Gikuyu language, Oral Traditions, Persecution of language.