AN EXAMINATION OF THE THEME OF BETRAYAL IN THE NOVELS OF MEJA MWANGI.

BY

BENSON UPAH

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL, AHMAIU BELLO UNIVERSITY, IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN AFRICAN LITERATURE.

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES,

AHMAEU BELLO UNIVERSITY

ZARI A.

DATE: APRIL, 1987.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis has been written by me and that it is a record of my own research work. It has not been presented in any previous application for a higher degree. All quotations are indicated and the sources of information are specifically acknowledged by means of references.

Benson Upah

Date: 28/3/88

CERTIFICATION

This thesis entitled "An Examination of the Theme of Betrayal in the Novels of Meja Mwangi" By Benson Upah, meets the regulations governing the award of the degree of Master of Arts (MA), approved for its contribution to knowledge and literary presentation.

Chairman, Supervisory Committee Date: 24/5/89

Member, Supervisory Committee Date: 24/5/89

Member, Supervisory Committee Date:

Head of Department Date: 17/12/89

Dean, Post Graduate School. Date: 10-9-90

DEDICATION

I give this thesis to Malam
ALIYU BABATUNDE AHMED, an
embodiment of courage,
justice and brilliance.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This thesis is a product of collective efforts; naturally, my gratitude goes to those who have helped to put it together. Foremost in my mind is Dr. David Ker who meticulously supervised this work. I must add that his style of writing greatly influenced mine. It is also on record that he introduced me to the novels of Meja Mwangi in 1980 when I was just a "toddler". This early contact, no doubt prepared me for this task.

I am indebted to Drs Mbulelo Mzamani who encouraged me to work on this topic and Aderemi Bamikunle who raised thought-provoking questions as the work progressed.

I am grateful to Abubakar Outhman Madagali, a friend, for lending me his books as well as making rib-cracking remarks about the entire experience, Thomas Ogbeche Upah for taking care of my things when I made those numerous disappearing tricks, Chris Abba for all the things we said and did together in FASS, Steve Anyebe for sharing several experiences including the ordeal of thesis-writing, Mr and Mrs. Samuel Eje Ogbaji for kindness and encouragement.

Mention must be made of Dr Ode Ogede, James Ahua, John Ojekah, Lola Omotoba, Joel Iji, Mathias Ohiu, Ini Idiakpan, Brown Ekeledo, Jacob Omenka, Joe Ankeli Ogbu, James Odah, Audi, Bature, Yusuf, for giving me moral support.

I must not forget to thank Dr Ken Evans in far away Birmingham and his friend in London who tried unsuccessfully to get me copies of Mwangi's Cockroach Dance and The Bushtrackers.

This acknowledgement will not be complete without the mention of Damaris who gave meaning and relevance to this work.

The struggle continues!

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines a largely neglected theme of Mwangi's novels, betrayal. Neglect of this theme results in distortion, and in some instances, total misunderstanding of Mwangi. This limitation is common with a few critics of Mwangi's work. These critics are content with writing about the obvious; the ills of the society without first examining the fundamental causo(s).

The dissertation takes a closer look at the novels of Meja Mwangi with not only the intention of identifying the 'original sin', but what or who was responsible for it and the consequences of the entire experience. The study provides a theoretical framework by first examining the ontological definition of betrayal before reviewing functional definitions by other writers.

Betrayal in this context is seen as a negation of ideals. Inevitably, the novels of Mwangi are a serious indictment of betrayers who are largely leaders of the people. The novels also defend the cause of the oppressed as well as profer, in some instances, solutions to the cyclical apostasy. The study also examines the sources of the author's creativity, his vision and responses of the people.

Mwangi's aesthetics include an effective use of setting as well as symbols, especially Timau Police Post

in Carcase for Hounds, Number Nine in Kill, Me Quick and Development House in Going Down **River** Road. He also pays attention to details such as street filth and odour.

This, reader deduces that the disharmony in colonial societies and the subsequent chaos in the neo-colonial era are traceable to betrayal. While **this**-reader knows that Mwangi is not radically different from his predecessors, he acknowledges that he is refreshi ngly new, blunt and realistic.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER:		PAGE
1.	Introduction	1
2.	Taste of Death	29
3.	Carcase for Hounds	61
4.	Kill Me Quick	90
5.	Going Down River Road	125
6.	The Bushtrackers	159
7.	Conclusion	186
	Bibliography	206

Chapter 1

Introduction

> "Each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfil it or betray it". 1

Many African writers are pre-occupied with examining the theme of betrayal to explain several developments in the continent, but few seem to attempt an analysis of betrayal as Meja Mwangi does to explain the unending socio-political disharmony in their societies. Mwangi investigates the theme of betrayal with seriousness and consistency. The efforts of writers like Stanlake Samkange, Mongo Beti and Ferdinand Oyono are limited by history, for their analysis is largely confined to the colonial era. Their concern is that, the Euro-African contact in the late 19th century which culminated in the colonisation of Africa was not executed by means of superior arms but also through betrayal. Part of their concern too is to redeem the image of the black man by presenting his heroism, science and grandeur of yesteryears. Chinua Achebe speaks for this group when he says:

> I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past - with all its imperfections - was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them.... 2

This vision which was informed by the politics of the time and therefore necessary, no longer enjoys overwhelming acclaim.

Even historians, especially Obaro Ikime and Ade Ajayi who write extensively about betrayal present the conflict as having taken place between blacks and whites, thus submerging the confrontation within the indigenous population.[3] Thus, one reads about the betrayal of 'astute' black leaders such as Jaja of Opobo, Nana of Itshekiri, Wa Gakere and Waiyaki by their white counterparts. In most cases, they are presented as industrious and fine leaders who fell while serving their people. While some of these arguments have been historically proved to be correct, they submerge a lot of historical realities such as the social relations of production in the indigenous society as well as the collusion between the African leaders and their European counterparts. Thus, this account is not only incomplete, it is limited and made doubtful by the inability of subsequent leaders, especially in the post-independence period to perform the feat of the Jajas' and the Nanas for their people.

Only a few writers like Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka and Ayi Kwei Armah recog nise the fact that the African past was not perfect and consequently situate the post-independence betrayals in that context. Although their cognition of this theme is rooted in history, it is limited in scope because it is the

interests of a minority class that are betrayed and not the peasants with whom they appear to concern themselves. Accordingly, Ezekiel Mphahlele, novelist and critic indicts his colleagues:

> (We) .... are generally parasites. We use 'low life' for our fiction and drama because it is richer for our purpose - than middle-class life. But we are writing exclusively for an educated class, which excludes low life ..... So we are entertained, so we feel elevated, so we talk about it in our living rooms Parasites. 4

Naturally, the heroes of these writers are elites whose capacity for thinking surpasses that of action. Rather than putting a concerted effort to redeem their society, they withdraw into themselves, ~~thus magnifying~~ their insignificance in the scheme of affairs. Gakwandi's comment is relevant here:

> All the angry young men that we meet in the novels - mostly expectant, naive and idealistic - are made to grapple with the problems of a modern, complex social set-up. Often, they are unnerved by its immensity. Some times they turn into cynics, some times they attain laudable goals; but we always recognise their insignificance....5

Gakwandi's comment is validated by many examples, especially Obi Okonkwo in No Longer at Ease, Baako, in Fragments, The Man in The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born and Odili in A Man of the People.

The only exception to the rule is Ngugi Wa Thiongo who consistently documents the travails of his people. His sympathy for the oppressed is amply demonstrated but

his narrative is marred by frequent authorial comment and downright preaching. While the reader recognises the need for urgency on the part of Ngugi, the frequent authorial intrusion reduces his works to pamphleteering and a simplicity that borders on condescension. More serious than all these is the loss of conviction in the torrent of preaching. In all cases therefore, limitations exist.

In the novels of Mwangi, the treatment of betrayal goes beyond the need to redeem the battered African image. It also transcends the war waged by the ruling classes of the European and African origins. The study does not only reveal the treachery of the British, it proves that Africans resented colonialism and could go to any length including the waging of a guerrila war to free themselves. This point is made more poignant by Mwangi at an interview:

> '..... Lets face it: there is no way they (Africans) could have won the war militarily. Yet, in spite of being out numbered, outgunned and overwhelmed, they kept on fighting, hoping that something would come to their rescue..... Eventually, when Haraka the hero gets killed, his spirit symbolically lives on. This was the point I was trying to stress: the spirit of resistance lived on... ... 6

The novels analyse the ignominious role played by the Chiefs and their retinue. Above all, they reveal that the African leadership whose responsibility it was to rehabilitate the followership, betrayed that trust.

And consequently, the people are made to suffer, and to ask if this was independence. Mwangi uses the poor people, especially labourers and jobless people to dramatise the viciousness and regularity of betrayal. His message "is to give the audience - particularly East African audience, Kenyan audience - a realization of the atmosphere around them". According to him, the people "don't know what's happening just in the street behind the one they are on. And this is what (he) is trying to show".[7] This gives betrayal a central position in the novels of Meja Mwangi, and in some ways different from what obtains in the novels of the other African writers. Of great significance too is Mwangi's recognition of betrayal as a cankerworm in the scheme of African socio-politics and how he uses it to explain the contradictions and backwardness of this society.

Meja Mwangi was born in 1948 in Nyeri district, Kenya and he belongs to the second generation of Kenya's writers. He published his first novel, Kill Me Quick in 1973. He has since written and published five other novels: Carcase for Hounds (1974), Taste of Death (1975), Going Down River Road (1976), The Bushtrackers (1979), and The Cockroach Dance ( ). His novels can be classified into two categories; those that deal with the processes of decolonisation and those which depict the travails of post-independence.

Criticism of Mwangi so far has been positive.

Critics agree about the quality of his works. Eustace Palmer for instance, describes his Kill Me Quick as a:

> Miniature painting. Everything is done on a small scale but with such refinement, delicacy, accuracy and taste that one can only refer to the work as a minor masterpiece. Apart from the brilliant characterization, there is Mwangi's unquestioned ability at creating vivid realistic scenes.8

Elizabeth Knight states categorically after reading Taste of Death and Carcase for Hounds that "Meja Mwangi's uniqueness lies in (his) wholeness of vision".[9] Although she describes Taste of Death as a secondary school reader, she concedes that it is a fine work of art. Eustace Palmer has also confessed that Going Down River Road "subsumes all the characteristics of the two earlier novels",[10] adding that the novel is the best of Mwangi's to date. Neil McEwan subscribes to this view when he points out that, "Going Down River Road persuades without that this is how things really are".[11]

Elizabeth Knight also praises The Bushtrackers. According to her:

> It is a fast-moving thriller that is topical, full of suspense and violence. As such it works very well, making Meja Mwangi one of the very few East African writers who can write successfully for the English-reading popular market.12

The reader can hardly fault this claim. Eustace Palmer demonstrates an understanding of the immediate African situation when he comments upon Kill Me Quick:

> The experiences of Meja and Maina are thus a paradigm, not just of the Kenyan situation, but of that in the whole of Africa where hordes of youths educated up to the school certificate standard discover that in spite of their qualifications the economic and social situation ensures that they have to roam the streets unemployed for years. The consequence is not just tremendous waste of potential, but a loss of faith in the value of education. 13

And although he states that "Meja Mwangi is certainly one of the most exciting of the new East African writers who have made social comment and analysis the dominant trend in the contemporary African novel", adding that the novelist has "a touching compassion for the social or political underdog",[14] he does not explain the factors responsible for the creation of the "underdog". At best, he traces the phenomenon of the "underdog" to post-independence mal-administration. This appears to be the trend in the criticism of Mwangi's works. Critics are adept at criticising the corruption, apostasy, violence and immorality in the post-independence Kenya without revealing the fundamental cause of these perennial vices. For instance, Neil McEwan is content to say that:

> Meja Mwangi's first novel Kill Me Quick tells of the misfortunes of two unemployed youths for whom there are no prospects in modern Kenya. His second Carcase for Hounds is a story of the Kenyan Emergency. Going Down River Road which followed in 1976 could only be read as a novel about poverty. Mwangi records the squalor of cheap lodgings, poor eating - houses, bars, dance halls, brothels, and the conditions of life at a building site where most of the characters work. 15

Usually, the critics concern themselves with aspects of style such as Mwangi's narrative technique and characterisation. According to Elizabeth Knight:

> The occasional details of characters are not matched by similarly detailed depictions of the physical environment ..... The narrative structure is the same in both works. Although basically chronological, the stories are not simple linear narrations from one person's point of view but are built up from the view points of several characters ..... Meja Mwangi is economical in his use of words. His description is rather a function of the plot, as the cave and its situation are mentioned only in relation to Kariuki's flight.[16]

Neil McEwan also displays a similar attitude when he comments that 'Mwangi's English rendering of the dialogue, which mixes British and American slang and bawdy, is exactly right: as inanely coarse as the characters' circumstances".[17]

While these criticisms are useful in the understanding of the novels, they do not highlight betrayal which occupies the central position in the writing of Meja Mwangi.

In spite of the differences in techniques and languages used, the African novelists are first and foremost rebels who are protesting against a society they consider unjust. They are united by the conviction that it is their sacred duty to protect the oppressed. And the only way they know how, is to expose the villainies and pretensions of the colonial and neo-colonial leaderships. The novelists have also

been able to record the responses of the people to the traumatic changes introduced into their societies. This dissertation examines Mwangi's writing as a contribution to the continuing anti-colonial and neo-colonial struggles by recognising betrayal as the major undoing of the African experience. It shows how Mwangi sees betrayal as a phenomenon that is encouraged by colonialism and blossomed by neo-colonialism. The dissertation among other things, identifies the betrayers and the betrayed, conditions under which betrayal occurs, factors responsible for betrayal, and the responses of the characters to it. Mwangi portrays betrayal as an organic reality, and in all his novels, the theme of betrayal is given a profound treatment.

#According to Chambers 20th Century Dictionary, New Edition, betrayal means:

> to give up treacherously: to disclose in breach of trust: to let go basely or weakly: to deceive (the innocent and trustful), to seduce: to discover or show.....18

As attractive as this definition is, it is not comprehensive and therefore cannot form the conceptual framework of this dissertation. In view of this, nothing less than functional and well illustrated definitions will be appropriate. E.A. Brett contends that the entire colonial experience is betrayal because it negates its so-called essence. He explains that "the creation of a colonial system rapidly transformed the underdevelopment of colonial society"[19] instead of raising the African man

from his primordial existence.. Gunder Frank shares this view when he writes that: "in the metropolis - periphery relationship..... the metropolis sucks out capital out of the periphery and uses its power to maintain the economic, political, social and cultural structure".[20] Ngugi's view sums everything up. According to him:

> ..... The colonial system did produce the culture of legalized brutality, a ruling class culture of fear, the culture of an oppressing minority desperately trying to impose total silence on a reactive oppressed majority. 21

Although colonialism is not the central issue here, however, it forms a vital part of this dissertation, hence these examples are considered appropriate.

Also relevant are the responses of some individuals to the apostasy of the post-independence leadership. Amilcar Cabral, for instance explains that the African leadership has been nothing more than an errand boy, and he considers this role extremely treacherous. According to him:

> This petite bourgeoisie which emerged out of foreign domination and is indispensable to the system of colonial exploitation, stands midway between the masses of the working class in town and country and the small number of local representatives of the foreign ruling class. Although they may have quite strong links with the masses and with the traditional chiefs, generally speaking, they aspire to a way which is similar if not identical with that of the foreign minority. 22

In the final analysis, the new leadership is not different from the colonial master, and this is a negation of independence. Peter Nazareth who shares this view adds that the African leadership is a worse evil than its European counterpart because, unlike the latter, it has nothing virtuous to offer. He explains that it is:

> a middle class that will have all the vices of the Western bourgeoisie and none of its virtues. This bourgeoisie will be increasingly wrapped in its own petty well-being, will engage in conspicuous habits of the Western bourgeoisie, will not save any money which can be used for national development. This bourgeoisie will divorce itself from the peasants and will end up as a kind of porter of the Western bourgeoisie. 23

Betrayal is not confined to the mismanagement of the economy; the culture of the people is also tied to the apron-strings of Europe. Ngugi Wa Thiongo considers this inexcusable betrayal, and consistently protests against it. He explains:

> ..... Since 1975, I had consistently criticised the domination of our lives by foreign imperialist interests, and especially at the Kenyan Cultural Centre and the Kenya National Theatre..... I have also constantly criticised the British Chairmanship of the governing Council of the Kenya Cultural Centre and the Kenya National Theatre. 24

Such is the degree of betrayal by a leadership that promised at independence to liberate the Kenyan from the clutches of imperialism.

Ezekiel Mphahlele who does not exonerate the African leadership from blame, however, holds the Western democracy bequeathed to African Countries responsible for these incidences of betrayal. He explains that it is "... backed by free enterprise, has all these built-in vices like graft, cut-throat competition, a climate charged with possibilities of assassination".[25] And Ngugi appropriately remarks that:

> No country can consider itself independent for as long as its democracy and culture are dominated by foreign interests. 26

A clear picture of betrayal emerges from these illustrations. It is a by-product of conflicts, and conflicts find concrete expression in individuals or groups of people attempting to protect and preserve their interests. Honour is the hallmark of greatness in society, and concern for honour automatically leads to the recognition of betrayal, "not only as an ontological possibility but as an historical reality".[27] Within the context of history, especially colonial history, both honour and betrayal are alternatives for man to choose from.

In society, although honour and betrayal are concrete alternatives, it is only honour that is regarded as man's vocation. Yet, its negation which inevitably results in betrayal, has assumed a greater dimension. Realisation of betrayal therefore transcends

perversion of justice and dehumanisation of man; it encompasses the oppression and exploitation of those yearning for real freedom. Accordingly, betrayers and the betrayed, in varying degrees are those whose humanity has been stolen or forcefully taken away from them. This definition offers the conceptual framework within which more investigation is carried out.

Meja Mwangi writes about betrayal for three major reasons: with the aim of identifying where the system went wrong, as an indictment of a few individuals and their leaders for their apostasy, as well as to demonstrate that the struggle for emancipation and restoration of honour is a necessity and is made possible only because betrayal although a historical reality, does not have a future. Mwangi impresses on the reader that the oppressor is blinded by his passion or folly and subsequently lacks the soul to liberate himself and the oppressed. Accordingly, it is the organised violence that springs from the weakness of the oppressed that is capable of redeeming the two parties, for it brings with meteoric speed and startling clarity to the subconscious of the oppressor that what he has been perpetuating is antagonistic to humanity. Hence the recreation in his novels of the Mau Mau movement and the subsequent defeat of the colonial masters as represented by John Cowdrey (Taste of Death) and Captain Kingsley (Carcase for Hounds).

Mwangi also maintains in his neo-colonial novels that those who were entrusted with the care of the newly independent states but wilfully or inadvertently abused their offices are traitors. In this dissertation, the term neo-colonial novels refers to those novels which examine betrayal in the post-independence Kenya. He however does not prescribe collective uprising as in the colonial novels. Why this is so is examined in the ensuing chapters. In spite of this difference, Mwangi recognises that betrayal can occur consciously and unconsciously. And no matter which form it takes, there are two distinct parties, the betrayers and the betrayed, and their rewards and losses respectively.

In treating betrayal in the novels of Mwangi, the study examines his whole vision and highlights some salient features of his technique.

The dissertation is divided into seven chapters. This chapter which is the first, deals with literature review as well as traces the origin and development of East African writing, pointing out in the process, the peculiar nature of its colonialism. This approach is considered appropriate because literary life cannot be divorced from socio-political life, and according to Abiola Irele, such an approach provides:

> ..... an insight into, and a feeling for, those aspects of African life which stand beyond the work itself, its extension into the African experience, and its foundation into the very substance of African existence...28

Eustace Palmer too subscribes to this view when he writes that "literature generally evolves out of a people's historical and cultural experience".[29] Ironically, he does not heed this credo in the analysis of Mwangi's novels.

To prove that betrayal is an organic reality and to appraise the issues raised in chronological sequence, this dissertation examines those novels which deal with the colonial era first, while the ones that focus on the neo-colonial betrayals are treated in subsequent chapters.

A thorough examination begins with chapter two which is devoted to Taste of Death. In this novel, Mwangi presents a physical confrontation between the forest fighters and the army of the colonial administration. For a deeper understanding of the conflict, an attempt is made to reflect the attitudes of the imperialists and the 'natives' to colonialism. While the former see it as a mission of civilisation, the latter perceive it as a loss of independence to aliens. It is this belief that emboldens them to reject colonialism most forcefully. Beneath the veneer of mission of civilisation, an idea all colonising powers have peddled for so long, lies the crux of the matter; acquisition of the resources of the 'Third World'. In the final analysis, the confrontation is not to determine whose culture is superior but who gets what, when and how? Inspector Cowdrey for

instance, keeps on dreaming about his ideal farm house with a hanging garden.

Mwangi's account dates from the early fifties when the rebellion broke out in Kenya. The nature of the struggle was such that some patriotic individuals were constrained to betray, and Mwangi represents this adroitly in the novel. For instance, many forest fighters including Njau betray under duress. Accordingly, Kariuki points out that "not even satan himself can stand the soldiers' tortures" (p.134). Other characters like the Chief and his home guards betray out of the gains they stand to make.

Elizabeth Knight describes the novel as a Secondary School reader. While this reader does not disagree with her, his main concern is with proving that the book contains elements of betrayal. The novel examines Mwangi's use of the single plot to achieve tremendous effect. The investigation also uncovers his vision in this early stage.

Taste of Death is compared to other novels that belong to this genre to see how close to history Mwangi is and his perception of these events. A wider comparison is made between his colonial and neo-colonial novels to see if there are changes in vision, characterisation and narrative technique.

The Third Chapter dwells upon Carcase for Hounds

which like Taste of Death, depicts the struggle for liberation by the Mau Mau. The investigation in this chapter differentiates between concrete betrayal and illusion of betrayal as well as examines the effects illusion has on the forest fighters and the colonial administration. In the novel, the Emergency Council feels betrayed by Kingsley's 'indolence'. The objective reality, however is that, Kingsley is not indolent; it is apparent that he overworks himself. The forest fighters in a similar mood curse Liki for overflowing its banks when they desperately want to escape from the precincts of Pinewood Forest. Even General Haraka has cause to believe that nature which has been a loyal ally has all of a sudden turned traitor.

This inevitably brings the investigation to the new dimension introduced by Mwangi: the making of elements active participants in the trials of his people.

The novel also investigates the nature of the confrontation between the colonial administration and the forest fighters. Consequently, the levels Chief Kahuru and General Haraka personify slavery and freedom respectively are examined. Above all these, the novel proves by using the example of Chief Kahuru and Corporal Njoro that the foundation stone of betrayal of national aspirations was laid during this period.

A clear picture of Mwangi's characters begins to emerge in this chapter, and they are ordinary people who although are frequently betrayed are resolved to fight colonialism. The novel exposes the colonial officials, especially men like Bwana Jackson, and how they tie the peasant economy to international capital.

In spite of the similarities between Taste of Death and Carcase for Hounds, the latter appears to be less romantic. It is more compact in scope in addition to having a double plot. Mwangi's vision is also more tragic. These differences not withstanding, they provide a convenient launching pad for his neo-colonial writing.

Mwangi sustains the theme of betrayal in his neo-colonial novels to prove the point that colonial betrayal is a prelude to neo-colonial betrayal. Essentially, his neo-colonial writing focuses on the revolution started by Mau Mau and the betrayal of this revolution by those who hijacked power at independence. Jomo Kenyatta, the leading nationalist and the first Prime Minister of independent Kenya had this to say in the Mau Mau days:

> The present situation means that once again the natives of the colony are showing their determination not to submit to the outrageous tyranny which has been their lot since the British robbers seized their land 30

After independence the tone changed. He and his colleagues appeared apologetic and timorous. He declared:

> The government of an independent Kenya will not be a gangster government. Those who have been panicky about their property - whether land or buildings or houses - can now rest assured that the future African government will not deprive them of their property or rights of ownership. 31

Chapter four of the dissertation which is devoted to Kill Me Quick mirrors the excesses and the contradictions of these elites. Uhuru, when it came fell below the people's expectations and thus became a relay race between the fleeing whites and emerging African elites. The latter took advantage of the opportunity to amass wealth to the detriment of the masses. Consequently, Mwangi justaposes very well-fed managers with ragged 'urchins' who float ghostly by. The novel explains that the unequal relationship between the international and peasant economies which to a certain extent is the handiwork of the elites constitutes betrayal. The consequences of this relationship naturally compel the peasants to betray one another.

The issue of land re-distribution which was the major cause of friction between the colonial administration and peasants also receives attention while the possibility of the recurrence of another Mau Mau movement is examined.

Gangsterism is discussed as an off-shoot of betrayal by the African leadership, and the methods the leadership uses to combat it are subjected to scrutiny. Are they farcical, reformative or revolutionary, and what does this tell us about the author? Is he infernally cynical? Why?

The novel examines Maina's indifference in detail and deduces serious messages contained in this life-style, and to what extent it tallies with Mwangi's vision. The city which Palmer says "is remarkable for its display of violence"[32] is also analysed in relationship to betrayal. Among many others, the novel answers these questions: what are the roles of cities in capitalist economies? Are these roles inimical to the collective development of the nation? Is the perversive violence a response to these roles or are cities 'genetically' violent?

The first clue to violence in the novel is contained in the opening poem:

> Days run out for me
> Life goes from bad to worse,
> Very soon, very much soon,
> Time will lead me to the end.
> Very well. So be it.
> But one thing I beg of you.
> If the sun must set for me,
> If all must come to an end,
> If you must be rid of me
> The way you have done with all my friends
> If you must kill me,

Do so fast.
KILL ME QUICK.

The picture is made more gloomy by Mwangi's words in the dedication. He writes:

> This little book is dedicated to all those little Mejas still in the back streets of the city, destined to stay there until they come of age, when the green van will come and whisk them off to Number Nine.

There is a tragic finality about their fate which makes the reader to think that Mwangi is a pessimist.

Chapter Five which is devoted to Going Down River Road is a continuation of the investigation in Chapter Four. The chapter discusses all the tricks mastered by the new elites as Mwangi depicts them in the novel and this involves the politics of post-independence and its inherent contradictions. For instance, Mwangi does not deny that Kenya has grown since independence; he however points out that this growth is largely superimposed and is therefore false and irrelevant. Palmer puts this succinctly:

> The building fittingly suggests that while 'development' goes on in one form, squalor and poverty still co-exist with it. It symbolises the indifference of the authorities to the sufferings of the masses, which the corruption of politicians and the police, the inequalities of the system and the high cost of living help to accentuate. 35

This unequal development is inevitably one of the

consequences of betrayal by the national leadership.

The maniacal quest for wealth is another area that this chapter focuses attention on. According to Ben (Going Down River Road), the rat race is so intense that:

> "Everybody was scrambling for big money, and no one cared how you made it. You could have sold the whole goddam country to eager buyers; a lot of those guys in the big cars on the avenue did just that" (p.54).

This unbridled greed obviously negates the essence of independence which the majority of the people fought for.

Going Down River Road exposes the poor socio-economic set-up of Kenya by revealing the country's helplessness in crisis like drought. It also explains why the economy is so weak. For example, the novel gives a graphic account of how multi-nationals like Patel and Chakur in collusion with the leadership siphon the national wealth to foreign lands. The politicians too are presented at their most ignoble moments and this / reader is 'fascinated' by their pettiness and beastliness.

The effects of these are all too obvious; a decadent society with a high rate of violence, unemployment, immorality, poverty, and consequently, starvation.

Ezekiel Ogunjimi's words are appropriate here. According to him:

> Moral decadence arising from sexual lust is another blemish of the 'big shots' after independence. 34

These neo-colonial excesses which Mwangi indicts subtly are what constitute the core of betrayals in Going Down River Road.

The Bushtrackers which is discussed in chapter six is a dramatisation of an observation made by Frantz Fanon thus:

> The national bourgeoisie will be greatly helped on its way towards decadence by the Western bourgeoisies, who come to it as tourists avid for the exotic, for big-game hunting and for casinos. The national bourgeoisie organizes centres of rest and relaxation and pleasure resorts to meet the wishes of the Western bourgeoisie. Such activity is given the name of tourism, and for the occasion will be built up as a national industry. 35

However, the industry is national only in name, because the Western bourgeoisie with the collusion of the national leadership, carts away all the benefits, leaving behind for the people, socio-political problems such as sexual promiscuity with its attendant consequences as in the case of AIDS, perversive violence and deep-rooted corruption. The over all effect is the displacement of the existing social relations of production.

Although the novel is about post-independence Kenya it nevertheless belongs in its own class. It is 'popular literature' that is fashioned after Italo-American thrillers. Consequently, it may be seen as a Secondary School reader like Taste of Death. In spite of its uniqueness, The Bushtrackers retains links with earlier novels as the motif of betrayal runs through the book from the first to the last page. For instance, in the earlier novels the case of betrayal is proved against the leadership. In this novel, although the mode of betrayal is different, the culprits and victims are basically the same.

This chapter recognises The Bushtrackers as an allegory of African leadership and its frightening dilemma. And since leaders are synonymous with their countries, Al-Haji represents the neo-colonial state which Nkrumah describes as having:

> all the outward trapping of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus political policy is directed from outside. It is a state in which political power lies in the conservative forces of the former colony.36

In order to bring out sufficiently well all the atrocities committed by Al-Haji, the novel examines his character in two separate ways: Al-Haji as an allegory and Al-Haji as a plaintive character.

Al-Haji's vicious criminal actions which are

treacherous in nature are made possible by Kenya's public servants who are thoroughly corrupt. The novel recognises the inglorious role of the public servants as a long established way of life. Consequently, Mwangi is restating Achebe's position that Africans betrayed each other to the Europeans before the latter betrayed them. In Arrow of God, for example, Achebe makes Ezeulu the hero to comment thus:

> ".... The white man sends a man from Umuru and the man from Umuru is shown the way by a man of Umuaro". He laughed. "What did I tell you, Akuebue? Our sages were right when they said that no matter how many spirits plotted a man's death it would come to nothing unless his personal god took a hand in the deliberation". 37

Betrayal manifests itself out of human relationships as well. Al-Haji, Ricardo, Mimi and Kuria in one way or the other betray one another. This string of betrayals is indicative of the fact that only the smartest survive in the underworld.

The city looms large as always and the novel explains its significance in relation to the lives of the people and internationa l capital.

Chapter Seven which is the conclusion, knots all the observations made in the previous Chapters.

NOTES

1. Frantz Fanon: The Wretched of the Earth, London: Penguin Books, 1963, p.70.

2. Chinua Achebe, Morning Yet on Creation Day, Essays, London: Heinemann, 1975, p.45.

3. Tarikh, Volume One Number One, 1965, p.11.

4. Ezekiel Mphahlele, The African Image, London: Faber and Faber, 1962, p.21.

5. Shatto Gakwandi, The Novel and Contemporary Experience in Africa. London: Heinemann, 1977, p.129.

6. Kunapipi Volume I Number I, Denmark: Dangaroo Press 1979, p.70.

7. Lee Nichols, ed. Conversations with African Writers, Washington DC: Voice of America, 1981, p.197.

8. Eustace Palmer, The Growth of the African Novel, London: Longman, 1979, p.310.

9. Eldred Jones, ed. African Literature Today No.13, Eustace Palmer, London: Heinemann, 1983, p.147.

10. Eustace Palmer, Op.cit., p.314.

11. Neil McEwan, Africa and the Novel, London: Macmillan, 1983, p.162.

12. Eldred Jones ed., Op.cit., p.156.
Eustace Palmer.

13. Eustace Palmer, Op.cit., p.308.

14. Ibid., p.307.

15. Neil McEwan, Op.cit., p.122.

16. Eldred Jones ed. op.cit., p.149.
Eustace Palmer.

17. Neil McEwan, Op.cit., p.122.

18. E.M. Kirk Patrick ed., Chambers 20th Century Dictionary, New Edition 1983, p.120.

19. E.A. Brett, Colonialism and Underdevelopment in East Africa: The Politics of Economic Challenge 1919 - 39, London: 1973, p.166.

20. A.G. Frank, Latin America, Underdevelopment or Revolution, New York: Monthly Review, 189 pp.227 - 8.

21. Ngugi Wa Thiongo, Ngugi Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary, London: Heinemann, 1981, p.64.

22. Amilcar Cabral, "Identity and Dignity in the Context of the National Liberation Struggle" in Return to the Source, New York, a Monthly Review, p.62.

23.. Peter Nazareth, An African View of Literature, Illinois: North Western University Press, 1974, p.34.

24. Ngugi Wa Thiongo, Op.cit., p.xxi.

25. Ezekiel Mphahlele, Op.cit., p.20.

26. Ngugi Wa Thiongo, Op.cit., p.xv.

27. Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed; New York: The Continum Publishing Corporation, 1982, p.44.

28. Christopher Heywood, ed., Perspectives on African Literature, London: Heinemann 1971.

29. Eustace Palmer, Op.cit., p.2.

30. Jomo Kenyatta writing in The Sunday Worker of London, 27th October, 1929. Quoted by Ngugi Wa Thiongo in Ngugi Detained: A Writers Prison Diary, London: Heinemann, 1981, p.64.

31. Jomo Kenyatta in a speech at Nakuru, Kenya on 12th August 1963. Quoted by Ngugi Wa Thiongo in Ngugi Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary.

32. Eustace Palmer, Op.cit., p.317.

33. Ibid., p.317.

34. Ezekiel Ogunjimi, The Treatment of Neo-Colonialism in the African Novel: A Study of the Novels of Ngugi Wa Thiongo and Sembane Ousmane (an Unpublished M.A. Dissertation) 1981, p.60.

35. Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, London: Penguin Books, 1963, p.123.

36. Panaf Great Lives: Kwame Nkrumah, Panaf Books Ltd., London: 1974, p.250.

37. Chinua Achebe, Arrow of God, London: Heinemann, 1960, p.136.

Chapter 2

Taste of Death

In the words of Meja Mwangi, Taste of Death "dealt with the Mau Mau from the point of view of somebody who took part in the movement."[1] Elizabeth Knight, citing Lennard Kibera's Voices in the Dark, Ngugi Wa Thiongo's Weep Not, Child and Mangua's A Tail in the Mouth, among many others as precedent, therefore strikes the right note in alluding that the novel is "part of a long line of books focusing on the emergency".[2] Mwangi corroborates this claim by revealing the sources of his inspiration:

> .... So I started writing and the first one was a story I had been told by a certain old man. It was about Mau Mau ... What happened to the old man, how he came to join the Mau Mau. I enjoyed it and I thought it would make good reading. And then just about the same time I read James Ngugi's Weep Not, Child. And I thought well, I could write a story. I didn't know how hard it was then.3

Unlike Weep Not Child, however Taste of Death is not a serious novel. Although published in 1975, this is Mwangi's first novel and perhaps the most amateurish to date. The mono plot is more of an exhibition of 'childish simplicity' than a wish to appear restrained and unbombastic. While the reader gets involved in the story once in a while, the perceptive one, nevertheless predicts effortlessly what happens next.

Characters are generally stereo-typed. There is

for instance, Kariuki, a determined forest fighter, a plucky maverick who leads rescue operations, plans complicated ambushes, offers succour to his cracking colleagues before getting caught. In spite of the gruesome tortures, he does not break down; not even after Njau and the General have done so. He escapes in gangster fashion after he is condemned to death; thus he has all the attributes of a teenage-reader hero.

Mbogo is juxtaposed with him to bring out his moral and military strength. Thus, Mbogo fights bravely from the beginning but threatens to desert, and is actually seen to be doing so before he changes his mind.

Inspector Cowdrey is portrayed as an example of, and a representative figure of the British colonialists and their brute methods, while Lieutenant Davies is identified as a:

> disciplined army officer who maintains a stiff upper lip throughout and gets through a Mau Mau ambush because of his reliance on strict military discipline.4

Elizabeth Knight appears to share this view when she declares that the novel:

> has a large cast of characters but there is little depth of characterization or subtlety of plot. In part this can be explained by the audience. The book is a secondary school reader, and naturally, keeping the readers excited and involved overrides other artistic considerations. Characters tend to fall into stereo-typed modes of behaviour.5

Mwangi himself confesses to the inadequacy of the novel as an artistic creation.

> ..... I was seventeen about that time ..... so I wrote that; and I used to paint when I was younger and I tried to illustrate it and I thought it was beautiful but nobody seemed impressed. So I thought I had to redo it and did it again but this time I decided to write a longer story and put in more material. Infact, this later became the novel Taste of Death ..... The English was a bit poor certainly ..... I changed a few places and shelved it for a year or so and then I went back to it when I had nothing else to do one holiday and I went through it, rewrote it and submitted it to the publishers.6

In spite of all these, Taste of Death deserves being studied because, apart from eliciting betrayal, it serves as a useful introduction to the novels of Meja Mwangi being the first to be written. Moreover, 'secodary school readers' are not entirely useless literature since a considerable percentage of the society is formed by the young people.

Taste of Death which is based on the Mau Mau uprising of the early fifties in Kenya revolves around Kariuki, an ex-soldier, beaten into a state of coma by the home guards for opening his door a shade late. The story develops with him as he makes his journey through the forest to join a band of forest fighters that is determined to reclaim the lost lands from the whiteman. The reader is exposed to their skirmishes against the colonial forces which is a combination of successes and failures.

Juxtaposed with the forest fighters are the colonial army, police and the prisons who are inexorably set to defend a land they won not through inheritance but by sword. The marrow-chilling terror spread by the colonial forces although perversive, is more concentrated in the prisons where prisoners are tortured to death on thrumped-up charges.

Caught between the fire of the liberation and colonial forces are the villagers whose loyalty in more instances than one is determined by the barrel of a gun. Although they are not directly involved in the fighting, they suffer numerous deprivations such as food and the right to choose their leaders. The war climate and the insensate cruelty of the colonial forces to the villagers make it possible to speak about two broad categories of betrayers in the novel: those who betray for gains accruing from the colonial administration and those who are forced to betray by the crude methods of the colonial forces.

The first case of betrayal in the novel is a paradox. The home guards as the names imply, are responsible for maintaining law and order in the village. Their functions also include patrolling the dug-outs and trenches around the village so that no 'cut-throat terrorist' could unleash harm on the villagers. It is this same guards in response to an order from the chief who go battering the villagers; thus negating the essence

of their existence as custodians of law and order. For instance, Kariuki is "given a terrible kick between his legs" for refusing to open his door on time. The authorial comment explains at great length the extent of the unmitigated aggression:

> ... He was kicked in the ribs again and again. All his will could not make his muscles move an inch. He was pulled up again and held between two soldiers... When the blow landed on Kariuki's face, it was like a sledge-hammer. He received three more blows... His eyelids which then felt sticky, parted, but whatever he could see was in a blur (p.7).

The torture of the villagers by the colonial forces exposes the latter as an authority that relies on violence for success. By inference therefore, it is an authority that is not acceptable to the people. One of the soldiers appropriately warns the chief "that the villagers are not so friendly" (p.11). And since colonial forces are part of the entire colonial machinery, it follows therefore that the mission of civilisation has been overtaken by that of violence which no doubt is betrayal of a 'philanthropic cause'. The grisly experience is once again contained in the authorial comment:

> During those times of terror, people lived in fear and nobody opened for anybody during the night. Though curfew came, and armed home guards started patrolling the villages during the night, executions were always there. Not only that. The soldiers and home-guards, too, came for those suspected of helping the forest fighters (p.13).

From the foregoing, violence ceases to be an abstraction but a frightening reality with no end in sight.

If the atrocities of the home guards against the villagers constitute betrayal, so is the action of the chief who orders the demolition of arable crops within the vicinity of the village. As a chief, he is the peoples' vanguard, and it is his primal and inalienable responsibility to defend their interests. He does not only abnegate this responsibility, his decision to "cut down ... all edible plants" (p.10) is motivated by a desire to enrich himself, thus, he belongs in the category of those who betray for personal gains. His loyalty to his pocket is incontestable:

> ..... the chief remembered his own pay packet. It seemed to be shrinking with each passing month. This was because he had failed to please the white D.C. And if his pay continued to shrink at such a high rate, the chief knew he would soon be working for nothing .... so something had to be done, and quickly. (p.10).

The nameless chief symbolises many an African chief during the colonial era; their hollowness, poverty, and above all their dilemma. His unpopular decision which is taken solely to placate the District Commissioner reveals a lot about the entire concept of Indirect Rule, a baby of the British. The Chief, who apparently is appointed to the throne neither by inheritance nor intelligence, but by a willingness to be a puppet of the colonial administration invariably

has to do an over-kill before he is sure of his salary.

Mwangi's response to all these is contempt, and he consistently demonstrates this by projecting an inane picture of the chieftains. In Carcase for Hounds, for instance, Chief Simba is equally timid and stupid. Mwangi also considers the role of the chiefs as inimical to the cause, and although he gives them victory, such victory is only ephemeral. His treatment of the chiefs therefore invites comparison with that of Ngugi Wa Thiongo in Weep Not Child. Jacobo, like the chiefs in Taste of Death and Carcase for Hounds is not only a dangerous tool of the colonial administration, he carries vengeance to a personal and often immoral level. So although he succeeds in exploiting and eliminating some of his people, thanks to the awesome power of the state, he finally gets killed by Boro, thus underscoring the efficacy of a peoples' struggle.

In conventional societies, while the police are charged with maintaining law and order, the national army wards off external aggressors thereby sustaining the sovereignty of the state. In the colonised world, these law enforcement agents fulfil none of these roles. The police and the army who are the contact men between the coloniser and the colonised visit violence on defenceless civilian population, thus betraying their cherished roles in society. According to Frantz Fanon:

> The intermediary (the police and the army) does not lighten the oppression nor seek to

> hide the domination; he shows them up and puts them into practice with the clear conscience of an upholder of the peace; yet he is the bringer of violence into the home and into the mind of the native.8

Subsequently the civilian population in Kirima village is tortured as this passage suggests:

> A kick from the warder brought the man slowly to his feet. But now his eyes were empty and glassy like those of a hypnotised person ... The Inspector stared at the man and the glassy eyes looked at his. They seemed to be passing over a message. They seemed to be begging to be understood (p.158).

In Mbogo's village the situation is the same. The wife recounts her ordeal in the hands of the colonial forces:

> 'They beat me but I did not know anything to tell. They went for my father and mother, and said that they would shoot them if I did not tell. But I knew nothing. They locked us up in different rooms. During the night the soldiers came and ..... and .....' she started sobbing (p.174).

As the co-ordinator of the colonial forces, and chief enforcer of imperial laws, Inspector John Cowdrey deserves a special mention. He is described as "one of those people who are naturally brutal (and) he alone could get anything out of the Mau Mau" (p.27). He personifies and represents the interests of the colonial administration. Cowdrey behaves like a professional butcher, not mindful of who gets hurt in the process. He is the typical colonial police man in the

African novel, cruel, brutal and sadistic, and he invites comparison with Gullet in Oyono's House Boy and The Old man and the Medal. For Cowdrey, however, betrayal operates at two planes: the level of the individual and the level of the representative figure. While these levels merge into one subsequently, it is necessary to point out that Mwangi presents him as some one who is blind to his excesses and follies because of inordinate ambition. For instance, he imagines the glory that will come to him when he finally destroys the Mau Mau:

> Then he would capture the man, the war would end and he would get a medal for his excellent work, services and so forth. Then he would go to live with his family in a farm bought in a quiet part of the country (p.156).

Cowdrey is also a man of grandiose dreams and these blind him from rational thinking. This feeling is amplified in his office:

> He saw his dream-farm and the house. The house was there exactly the way he would have liked it to be. The windows were painted with colours he liked and the curtains were his wife's best. There were flowers, ... carnations, roses, just the way he would have liked it to be (pp.230 - 1).

The major obstacle to these recurrent dreams is the Mau Mau movement and this explains Cowdrey's obsession with the former and the urgent need to get rid of it. When destroying the Mau Mau becomes an impossible task, Cowdrey feels immeasurably betrayed and frustrated. However, the feeling of betrayal can only be fully

grasped when he is studied as a representative figure. As a representative of the proponents and exponents of the superior race myth, Cowdrey has come to Kenya ostensibly to conquer, rule and civilise the native and the native should be grateful for this philanthropic act. This warped-up mentality precludes him from recognising the natives as human beings but a "herd of wild pigs" (p.201). When the natives therefore challenge this assertion by waging a guerrilla warfare, Cowdroy does not only feel betrayed, he becomes neurotic and psychotic. For in several respects, the war is not only an act of impudence but a negation of 'mission civilastrice'. Consequently he fails to accept decolonisation as a programme of fury, disorder and destruction: a historical process that must necessarily deploy greater and sustained violence against the coloniser. The raison d'etre of the Mau Mau movement which is spelt out below also escapes him. The 'natives' have consistently asked:

> ... whose grand father owned acres of lands
> die without a place to be buried in?
> Wouldn't he want to lie next to his
> ancestors when he died? Must his
> children be put into bondage after his
> death in order to get food?

So, ultimately decolonisation robs Cowdrey the opportunity of being a nabob and a chance to 'educate' a meek and docile people who are in dire need of 'civilisation' and 'salvation'.

Colonialism as an institution also betrays its

agents and surrogates. One of such in a series of betrayals is John Cowdrey the custodian of colonial laws. The Chief Inspector conveys to John Cowdrey from the Security Council a serious indictment of the former over the way he conducts the war. The Chief Inspector re-echoes the Security Council's opinion by saying that although the colonial forces "are doing their best but this is not enough" (p.46). While this statement is not complimentary, Cowdrey's retort, "I was wounded doing their job" (p.46) is more worrying. The reader is piqued by the phrase, "their work". Whose work? Is Cowdrey no longer an esoteric member of the club? This intrigue which is analogous to that of the Chief and the DC indicates that the colonial edifice has started to crack. The question, "but what can I do if even well-trained troops are beaten?", put by Cowdrey drives home this message. The conclusion drawn from these accusations and retorts is that colonialism has no room for those who cannot device new, supportive methods, no matter how chilly. In the end, Cowdrey has to leave Kenya because he has outlived his usefulness.

Betrayal in Taste of Death is made manifest by the culture of violence. Violence destroys a peoples' way of life as well as introduces fear and suspicion into their consciousness. Paulo Freire has said that:

> Once a situation of violence and oppression has been established; it engenders an entire

> way of life and behaviour for those caught up in it - oppressors and oppressed alike. Both are submerged in this situation and both bear the marks of oppression.10

Consequently, the oppressor and the oppressed are afflicted by the fear of the unknown which makes them suspicious of everything. Wide-ranging rules which are predicated on survival are made and enforced to the letter. A breach of any of these rules could cost the lives of the fighters and perhaps the entire struggle, so it attracts severe penalties. This explains why Mbogo is accused of betraying the cause by Njau and Wambu when he takes the crawling Kariuki to the hide-out. He is presumed guilty until the General declares otherwise. But even the General's decision is not borne out of magnanimity or rationality; it is informed by a personal relationship. Njau and he were once classmates.

The decision to pardon Mbogo and to spare Kariuki are comments made by Mwangi: adherence to rules and regulations is a prime necessity for continued survival but these rules should not negate the essence of a liberation army, which is freedom for the oppressed and not their extermination.

While in Carcase for Hounds the little Leader dies before the story begins, in Taste of Death, the Leader is seen co-ordinating the activities of the forest fighters. His role is so important in the struggle

that Mbogo and Munyi are detailed to protect him between their hide-out and the next. In the process of discharging their duties, the Leader gets caught and taken to Karima prison. The General thinks Mbogo and Munyi have betrayed the Leader since "they just stood like old monkeys and watched the soldiers take him away" (p.50). While negligence of duty constitutes betrayal of trust, this / reader nevertheless is hard-put to conclude that Mbogo and Munyi have betrayed the Leader. If, as it is not likely to happen, the reader insists their action is betrayal, it is inadevertent. However, Kariuki who Mwangi speaks through, makes a more rational statement. He says that "it was not their fault" (p.50). He queries:

> "Suppose they had started fighting and got themselves killed by the soldiers. Who would have come to tell us of the arrest? Tell me that. Who would have told us that the Leader was captured?" (p.50).

This statement absolves them of total blame. It also implies that the enemy soldiers have done an excellent reconnaissance.

Similarly, the dare-devil rescue operation led by Kariuki to Karima prison in which the Leader gets killed is a case of inadvertent betrayal. Although Mbogo and Munyi, Mwangi's scapegoats are willing to accept blame for the tragedy, it is difficult

to apportion blame let a lone dangle the charge of betrayal. The major concern here is the significance of the Leader's death at this (point in) time. To what extent has it enhanced or undermined the struggle? The colonial aggressor and the forest fighters consciously or inadvertently admit that the Leader represents the struggle, hence his death symbolises the end of the struggle. The Chief Inspector for instance explains the importance of the Leader to Cowdrey:

> We have tried everything and failed. We must find this Leader ..... We must get this man. So you see the futility of the capture of a mere general. This Leader is the master mind (p.47).

It is for this reason that the Leader demands that his death be kept secret from both the colonial forces and the forest fighters. The few generals who know about the incident are made to "take an oath of secrecy" (p.65) to remain quiet.

Mwangi's position is however, different from that shared by the forest fighters and the colonial forces. He enunciates that while it is possible for a single person to initiate a revolutionary struggle, no one is indispensable. This is why in spite of the Leader's death "the fighting had to continue until they won their objective" (p.66).

Kariuki, in spite of his angelic portrait is one of

those who betray the cause for inexplicable reasons. For instance, he does not fire a single shot in the ambush that destroys the army convoy because "he was shaking violently ... he held his gun clumsily in his hands" (p.89). This sounds rather strange considering the fact that he has fought in tighter corners as a soldier. Mwangi does not give sufficient explanation for what he means by Kariuki's betraying act. If he intends to present him as a metamorphosing character, then he has done it badly. This artistic clumsiness extends to an unnamed forest fighter, who after the ambush stumbles on the body of Lieutenant Davies, and instead of finishing him up runs to report to the General. According to the text:

> He made sure the man was not dead and in his thirst for blood, he unsheathed his knife to finish him, but he saw the man's gun. He first stopped to examine. He turned it this way and that, then giving a wild swoop, ran to look for the General (p.90).

Although it is true that fighters get excited now and then, it is nonetheless ridiculous for a fighter to rush off with a gun to the General when the dreaded enemy at his mercy is yet to be finished. Why do they acquire guns and ammunition? This is one of the biggest cases of betrayal in the novel, for, later, it is the spared Lieutenant who leads a smashing operation against the forest fighters. Mwangi sounds uncrealistic while this anonymous character appears naive and stupid.

Kibara, a one time brave forest fighter is one of those who betray the cause under extremely dehumanising conditions. He re-surfaces after 'disappearing' for two months, leading soldiers to the sacred hide-out of the forest fighters. Although this single act is responsible for the routing of the fighters from that zone, they do not call him a villain. They understand that violence has a way of confusing and reducing the oppressor and the oppressed to the status of beasts as well as undermining the resolve of the oppressed. Kariuki in apparent understanding of the situation says:

> Take the man Kibara, for example, the one who led the soldiers to our hide-out near the Sacred Rock. He was a brave man before he was captured. See what they did to him and turned him into a traitor (p.134).

In spite of the reluctance of the forest fighters to describe him as betrayer he is still one because he has the option of keeping quiet and ultimately paying the supreme sacrifice. Pepetela for instance, presents options open to a prisoner of War in Mayombe: A Novel of the Angolan Struggle thus:

> "It traps a bloke to be a prisoner. .... He remains isolated, against everyone. Every face he sees is an enemy and there you are alone, in the middle of them. Its hard, there's no doubt its hard. What can you do in such a situation? There are some who resist, others talk. I have the impression they talk more because of the isolation, than because of any actual physical suffering". 11

If these options are convincing, and they definitely are,

then Kibara is a betrayer. His nature of betrayal makes the story move forward as well as avails the reader the opportunity of studying the forest fighters at close quarters. They are exposed to numerous hazards such as physical confrontation with soldiers and wild beasts and very poor shelter and food. Yet these are not as agonising as having to live perpetually with the psychological fear of one of them squealing to the soldiers. Inevitably, Mwangi's portrayal of the warfare invites comparison with Ngugi's. While the former shocks the reader with the realities of the struggle, the latter presents a romantic picture of the undertaking. The conversation between Mr. Howlands and Boro in Weep Not, Child illustrates this point:

> The nightly patrols had always been a special pleasure for Mr. Howlands. They gave him a feeling of power and strength.
>
> The door opened. Mr. Howlands had not bolted the door. He glanced at his watch and then turned round. A pistol was aimed at his head.
>
> 'You move - you are dead'.
> Mr. Howlands looked like a caged animal.
>
> 'Put up your hands'.
> He obeyed. Where was his habitual guardedness? He had let a moment of reflection unarm him.
>
> 'I killed Jacobo'
> 'I know'
>
> 'He betrayed black people. Together, you killed many sons of the land. You raped our women. And finally you killed my father. Have you anything to say in your defence? .....'

'Nothing'
'Nothing. Now you say nothing.
But when you took our ancestral lands - '

'This is my land'. Mr. Howlands said
this as a man would say,'This is my woman.'

'Your land! Then, you white dog, You'll
die on your land'.

Mr. Howlands thought him mad. Fear
overwhelmed him and he tried to cling to life
with all his might. But before he
could reach Boro, the gun went off. Boro
had learnt to be a good marksman during
the Second World War.12

This passage has all the vignettes of a Hollywood film: business-like dialogue, fast-moving action and finally, accomplishment of mission before Boro gets caught.

Inanimate objects which lose their use value especially at a critical period could be deemed to have betrayed their owners. The ambush laid within the precincts of the Sacred Rock is almost a total success until the bren guns (the killer weapons) get jammed. This enables the soldiers to have an edge over the forest fighters, thus speeding up the process of their defeat. According to the text :

Kariuki looked at the bren-gunners again.
One of them was lying with his bleeding
head on his gun. It had jammed. Kariuki
dropped from the tree wishing he had taught
the men how to deal with jams. He had
overlooked the chance of a jam and now it
happened (p.117).

This suggests that in preparing for a battle, nothing should be left to chance as this could prove to be costly.

If the jamming of guns at a critical period constitutes betrayal, so also is the injury Kariuki sustains during the fight. It impedes his progress, thus forestalling the attainment of his objective. The spiritual will for survival is neutralised by physical pain:

> He could not reach the wound well enough to do anything about it and so he lay on his front on the grass .... With every heart beat a twang of pain ran through his body ..... (p.117).

Maraga's woman is a traitor in her own class. She is neither a police woman nor a warder but manages to wreak indescribable havoc in the village. No noticeable rewards are attached to her as an informant yet she does it with skill. This is why she is considered to be very dangerous. She is responsible for the annihilation of Mbogo's family. Wanjiru reports:

> Last year she said that the boys were seen taking food into the forest. The Chief ordered the boys to be shot (p.169).

She is also responsible for Wanjiru's death, having betrayed her to the home guards. Mwangi however, does not think she is anything more than a tool in the services of the colonial administration. Her gruesome death is retribution for her sins against the people. The wailing dog and the hooting owl in the hour of her death symbolise the general tragedy that has descended on the land. It is not her death the beasts mourn but

those of the patriotic and the innocent.

However, Maraga's woman is not the only one who bears the stigma of treachery in the novel. Colonialism establishes institutions such as the army, the police and prisons in order to propagate its interests. Sequel to this, it employs and conscientizes a handful of 'natives' who torture and murder their kin all in the name of serving 'His Majesty!. Like the Chief, they betray largely because of the rewards from the colonial administration. In spite of their villainy, it is a sign of the collapse of a weaker culture in contact with a stronger one. The pages of colonial history are replete with these men who are popularly known as collaborators.

Once again Kariuki cuts the image of a betrayer in spite of the saintly image Mwangi consistently strives to carve for him. Mbogo is in possession of deadly secrets which Kariuki knows are not safe with him. For example, he is one of the few men that know about the death of the leader as well as logistic details of the band and Kariuki is confident that the soldiers will get them out of him. "Mbogo therefore deserves being shot. For that and the cowardice of giving away one's country to foreigners" (p.142). But Kariuki cannot bring himself to do this because of bonds of friendship which invariably make this reader to ask; what are bonds of friendship compared to

national survival? The utilitarian conception of society which supports the torturing of the individual so long the aim is to maximize human happiness applies. This is why it is considered that for risking the life of a whole nation because of a friend Kariuki is a traitor.

In conventional societies, wars have codes of conduct and such codes regulate the wars in such a manner that abuses are minimal. It is on record that those Germans who indulged in excesses during the Second World War were tried and convicted for war crimes. But the colonial war has no code of conduct. Colonial forces unabashedly betray the tradition of war by torturing every prisoner of war to death. Forest fighters when caught are treated like criminals and not prisoners of war. They are shot or hanged after extorting confessions from them. Their gruesome experiences include the removal of toe nails, staying without food and sleeping in flooded cells. Kariuki's experiences illustrate the point better:

> He was taken into a room in which there were five warders armed with clubs and whips. The small room was lighted with a single electric bulb high up at the centre of the roof. He was stripped naked. Then one of the warders brought his club crashing on Kariuki's head. Blood streamed red and hot into Kariuki's eyes. And while he was thus blinded, the other warders fell on him. Blows rained on from every direction .... Some pulled on his long hair and dragged him to the ground. Then they beat his private parts.

> When he fainted they poured cold water on him to revive him and then beat him some more .... Then they dragged him along the corridor to a dark cell in which there was ankle-deep water, and threw him in (p.206).

One of the many consequences of these unconventionalities in Karima prison is the breaking down of men like the General and Njau. Under severe dehumanising conditions, he blurts out the sacred secret; "he (Leader) ..... is dead" (p.209). The odds against him are many, no doubt, but the revelation of this dreaded secret exposes him as a General with weak resolve, low intelligence and thus susceptible to British treachery. Maina, is an antithesis of the General. Although marginally discussed in the novel, he appears to know the psychology of colonialists and their surrogates more than any other character. He does not hesitate to deal with the driver whom he believes will betray him to Inspector Cowdrey and the sleuth police.

If the Mau Mau movement enlists the support of some of the warders then the stomach-turning brutality in Karima prison makes this / reader question the credibility of this claim. In several respects therefore, Maina is like the Red One in Peter Abraham's Mine Boy, more of artistic creation than reality.

More often than not, the villagers for whom the forest fighters endanger their lives betray them.

After the tragic invasion of their hide-out by the colonial forces, Mbogo asks in misery "..... how did they come to know where our hide outs are?" (p.134) and Kariuki answers dismally, "our people showed them". He however hastens to add that they do not betray the fighters out of their volition:

> ... still we cannot blame them. They do not do it willingly. Not even Satan himself can stand the soldiers' tortures (p.134).

Mwangi implies that a guerrilla army is largely composed of rural indigenous people, and by its very nature, a peoples' war is total, hence its tremendous dependence on the rural people for food, shelter, arms and reconnaissance. The support of the villagers although indispensable, is fragile and reversible. If the cost of supporting the struggle, for instance, becomes very expensive they withdraw it. Accordingly, the forest fighters despair. Mbogo for example, is immeasurably disillusioned, and he moans pitiably:

> .... even hiding is useless now, Kariuki. How can I hide from you while you know all the places to which I could go? (p.135).

Understandably, he threatens to desert because victory appears to be an illusion. Mbogo is a brave fighter, kind-hearted and very convincing as a character, but his decision to quit at this point in time reveals him as a man with shallow convictions. His actions constitute a betrayal especially when it is remembered

that he was there when the Leader warned against surrender. He might not reveal the whereabouts of his comrades or the Leader as he has promised, but by "agreeing to give up the idea of fighting for his land" (p.141) he has betrayed the cause. In his ignorance, he does not realise that peace and tranquility which he seeks can only be got through victory. However, Mwangi seems to be saying that disillusionment is part of the liberation struggle since Mbogo refuses to desert at the last minute.

Betrayal may also be observed in civilian - military relationships, but this does not achieve the spectacular effect Mwangi's technique seems to suggest. At best he ends up storeotyping. Mwangi paints the usual image of the police; creepy, sly, crooked, miserly and the children detest them. "They (boys) hated policemen. Policemen were cruel brutes who always beat the small boys for nothing. They also captured their parents and even their bigger brothers" (p.50).

On the other hand, he presents the soldiers as likeable ruffians who drink, sleep with the girls and give the boys biscuits in spite of the tricks played on them. The soldiers are generally loose and friendly with the villagers. This close rapport is shattered by the sudden theft of a sten gun which the soldiers consider a betrayal of their good naturedness. The authorial comment underscores the gravity of this

incident:

> The theft happened at a critical time, because that very afternoon the Brigadier and some other 'big' men were to have a closing conference (p.151).

Accordingly, when the children meet the usually affable soldiers for sweets and biscuits, they are stoned by the guards who are by now under suspicion.

Mwangi however, does not think the theft is betrayal per se; it is an extension of the war in the bush, especially since a guerrilla war is supposed to be a total war.

Over-concern or anxiety could equally prove inimical to a liberation struggle as much as indifference or outright antagonism. This is the point Mwangi is making, when in his 'custodian role' Kariuki betrays himself to Inspector Cowdrey in the hospital. "Kariuki twitched against his will" when the question; "do you know the Leader?" (p.198) is put to him. He wonders just how much Cowdrey knows. It is this overt concern that makes Cowdrey suspicious and vicious.

Of significance too, is the initial deployment of Britain's popular armour, the facade of friendship in the contact between Cowdrey and Kariuki in the hospital. Cowdrey is all smiles but Kariuki sees beneath the veneer of this friendship. He:

> Could tell a wolf in a sheep's clothing ..... He was convinced that all this smiling and calling him friend was just a trick to make him talk (p.196).

The importance of this meeting is not so much the attempted treachery as it is the fool Cowdrey makes of himself. While it illustrates the contempt with which the British hold the Africans, it also refutes their pre-conceived notion of the African - a little boy who can easily be cajoled.

The effects of the guerilla warfare on the people are varied, but for Mbogo it transcends physical and spiritual violence. He has managed to re-unite with his wife, and he "knew what was required of him" (p.172) when his wife lovingly placed a hand on his shoulder in the dark, but the years in the bush have taken their toll. Although the betrayal is transient, it shows the degree to which the war has affected his psyche.

Much later Mbogo frequently sneaks into the village to indulge in sexual relationship with his wife. Although Mbogo finds fulfilment in the act, Mwangi appears to frown at it. He suggests that such things should not be combined with the serious business of fighting because they detract attention. And they could also prove to be risky: Mbogo's wife gets killed in the process of meeting him. Her death therefore is a statement on the 'dos' and 'don'ts'

of a guerilla warfare. Mbogo rushed his joy when others were still fighting, so when the fighting comes to an end he has nothing to go back to.

The flash on the mountain which makes "the fighting and its tragedies ... a thing of the past" is ephemeral; and Kariuki ruminates disappointedly:

> He had never thought that it would be like that. Just one flash and that was that! After all that fighting! (p.252).

In several ways, this is a betrayal of the peoples expectations. The light they conceived in their minds apparently is bigger than what they are offered on the mountain. The light connotes many things; freedom, rewards, instrument of purgation. The insufficient light is therefore prognistic of the misfortunes and betrayals of independe

According to Paulo Freire:

> Once a situation of violence and oppression has been established; it engenders an entire way of life and behaviour for those caught up in it - oppressors and oppressed alike. Both are submerged in this situation and both bear the marks of oppression.

This dictum provides a useful clue to the death of Cowdrey's wife in the hands of the forest fighters. It does not only drive home the realities of the struggle, it equalises Cowdrey with many 'terrorists' whose families he has annihilated. The instincts of domination and possessive consciousness which are all too familiar

features of Cowdrey have also been destroyed. Now derelict, he feels terribly betrayed by the Chief Inspector and the other superior officers. He feels he has been used:

> .... as a tool, to try and crumble down a rock which would leave it battered and useless. That was exactly what they had done. So in the end only Cowdrey had to flee while they sat on their fat bottoms and continued their work as though nothing had happened. The cunning bastards (p.254).

While not denying the merits of this accusation, it is necessary to point out that Cowdrey's obsession with dreams destroys him. It does not occur to him that a collective struggle can only be driven aground for a while, it cannot be totally destroyed. But his grand drea ms impair this objective reality, and this unwittingly prepares him for the tragedy. The Chief Inspector's words recur:

> 'Don't try to carry all the worries of the fighting on your shoulders or you'll kill yourself ..... Take it from me, Inspector, it just isn't worth it to wreck your life ..... The fighting is not for you. It is for our government and the soldier ..... (pp.235 - 6)

The Chief Inspector is a tender-hearted fellow. Against his paternal advice Cowdrey drives himself to a stand still for personal motives:

> ..... the farm would be cheap because it would be sold to an important person. He would be important, of course, after capturing the Leader and thus ending

the fighting (p.161).

Even if his superiors have used him, it is because he offers himself like a sacrificial lamb. The truth, however, is that Cowdrey symbolises many liberal Englishmen who did not understand the implications of imperialist exploitation and oppression. They did not know that Europe was putting at stake its 'civilisation' in these 'barbaric' lands. Imperialism is synonymous with violence, and Cowdrey is immersed in it and naturally, there was bound to be a struggle for independence which employs counter-violence as its major weapon. In this respect, the moving force behind the Mau Mau movement "is a powerful desire for justice and a refusal to compromise in pursuit of truth and justice".[13] The white colonialists on the other hand only see the cruelties of the Mau Mau not its raison d'etre.

Cowdrey reminds this reader of Dr Van Dyke in A Grain of Wheat who cannot bear the thought of Kenya having independence. But while Dr Van Dyke commits suicide, Cowdrey returns home a demented ex-colonial officer.

For many people, the new dawn is a dawn of happiness but not Mbogo. He shoots himself in the chest and dies with the following words:

I have done my duty ..... It is finished.

> I lost everything. No home to go to. No body will miss me. Go back to your people, Kariuki. Enjoy freedom. We fought for it but we can't all have the same feelings after this (p.257)

This speech is sentimental and there is therefore justification for Kariuki's remorse; his self-confessed responsibility for the suicide. Beyond this emotionalism there is nothing. Mbogo has always exhibited fatalistic traits. Moreover, freedom really is not for the Mbogos because they fought for very insular reasons. General Kaniti perhaps lost more than Mbogo, but does not commit suicide. If others were like Mbogo, independence could not have been won. In a curious manner there is a striking semblance between him and Cowdrey. They took it too personally.

Although Taste of Death is Mwangi's first novel and a secondary school reader, he manages to carve a clear vision that will run through his later novels. This vision which encapsulates the life style of the oppressed and the exploited, oscillates between their aspirations and realities. It is a wholesomeness of vision predicated on collective struggle for total redemption. It is a hopeful vision, for in spite of the great obstacles in their way, the forest fighters fight until the white man goes "back to his home across the waters".

Taste of Death demonstrates that betrayal is a

human trait which is universal. Colonialism provided trying situations for this trait to manifest itself. Accordingly, the novel does not only reveal motives for why people betray, it explores the physical confrontation against it. While the novel concedes that physical resistance is an antidote to betrayal, it proves that this can be inadequate. More investigation continues in Carcase for Hounds, another novel that examines the Mau Mau uprising.

NOTES

1. Kunapipi Volume I Number I, Denmark: Dangaroo Press, 1979, p.68.

2. Eldred Jones, ed. African Literature Today Number 13, London: Heinemann, 1983, .p.146.

3. Lee Nichols, ed, Conversations With African Writers, Washington D.C., 1981, p.196.

4. Eldred Jones ed, op.cit., p.148.

5. Ibid, pp.147 - 8.

6. Lee Nichols, ed, op.cit., pp.196 - 7.

7. Meja Mwangi, Taste of Death, Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1975, p.16. Subsequent page references are in the text.

8. Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, London: Penguin Books, 1963, p.29.

9. Ibid, pp.27 - 8.

10. Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, New York: The Continum Publishing Corporation, 1982, p.44.

11. Pepetela , Mayombe: A Novel of the Angolan Struggle, London: Heinemann, p.90.

12. Ngugi Wa Thiongo, Weep Not, Child, London: Heinemann, 1964, p.145.

13. Peter Nazareth, An African View of Literature, Illinois: NorthWestern University Press, 1974, p.141.

Chapter 3

CARCASE FOR HOUNDS

Carcase for Hounds like Taste of Death, focuses on the Mau Mau movement and not surprisingly it has betrayal as its central theme. The story centres around General Haraka and his band of forest fighters during their final stage of conflict with the colonial forces. General Haraka is revealed as a veritable commander with a lot of charisma and courage. In spite of the fast-dwindling military, human and material resources on his own side and massive deployment of troops by the enemy, he goes for confrontation instead of surrender. The driving force behind his onslaught is his hatred of the men; Kingsley "the arrogant D.C." and Kahuru Wamai, the effeminate chief: both of them symbols of oppression and exploitation. Ironically, it is Kahuru Wamai who lives in mortal fear of Haraka that inflicts the mortal wound on the latter. Consequently, in his delirious moments, Haraka narrows the conflict to between himself and the Chief.

On the other side of the conflict is Captain Kingsley, an administrator - turned soldier whose motivation is not so much a wish to crush the Mau Mau as it is a desire to avenge the humiliation he suffered in the hands of Haraka when he was an administrator. Naturally, he leads 'Operation Haraka', an intricate military offensive designed to capture

General Haraka. However, in spite of Kingsley's rabid hatred of Haraka, he has a grudging respect for him because of his sterling qualities as a Commander.

Sandwiched by the two opposing forces are the frightened villagers whom each side wants to 'protect'. In the ensuing struggle between the colonial forces and the Mau Mau, betrayal obtains at the levels of the self, human and material relationships. There are also illusions of betrayal.

It is not an accident that the first instance of betrayal in the novel is an illusion, in many places the story oscillates between reality and illusion. As in Taste of Death, Captain Kingsley is pressured by the Emergency Council to capture Haraka, and when he fails to achieve this objective, the Council concludes that he has betrayed His Majesty's mission. Accordingly the Council expresses its displeasure in very strong terms. The Council's spokesman, Brigadier Thames puts the bite on Kingsley in a carefully worded statement:

> They (Members of Emergency Council) think you have been licked. Remember they entrusted the job to you on account of your knowing the bandit well; send a thief to catch a thief.....1

While it is obvious that the Council no longer reposes confidence in Kingsley, objective realities indicate that he has not betrayed the colonial cause, for he is

seen running in the rain and squelching through mud in his bid to capture Haraka. Kingsley also suffers psychologically as the hunt for Haraka intensifies and this agony is conveyed in his reply to Brigadier Thames' accusations:

> 'But you know Haraka is not like the others', he protested. 'He is slippery ..... well .....' (p.14).

The query issued by the Council members reveals their ignorance instead of diminishing the status of Kingsley. As is the case with many colonials, they either do not or refuse to understand the intricacies and realities of the struggle. It is as if "though all one had to do was just go out into the jungle and invite him (Haraka) out of hiding" (p.11). The truth however is that, the Mau Mau is a movement of the people who in spite of the great fire power of the colonial forces are determined to succeed. Eustace Palmer captures the mood when he writes that:

> The Mau Mau emerges as a necessary ruthless organisation, necessarily because only by using ruthless methods can it be absolutely sure of the continued support of the people who are themselves terrorized by the British, and the solidarity of the fighters, many of whom are tempted to surrender when firm leadership is lacking.2

Chief Kahuru Wamai is one of the leading betrayers in the novel, and he does this on several levels for rewards from the colonial administration.

The mere acceptance to serve in the administration of the colonials is betrayal itself, since in Biblical diction, 'Man cannot serve God and Mammon at the same time'. However, this is mild compared to his other treacherous acts. Chief Wamai killed Weru, Haraka's contact man and blamed it on the Mau Mau. Even Old Mwaniki, his father-in-law to whom he is indebted, and over whom there is an unwritten accord forbidding his elimination is eventually killed by the home guards led by Wamai.

His acts of betrayal are by no means restricted to settling of vendetta with personal enemies only. Chief Kahuru Wamai and the home guards wage a ditch battle with forest fighters, thus postponing the day of independence. In spite of his excesses, the novel demonstrates that Chief Wamai is not an aberration of the colonial administration. As in Taste of Death, Mwangi in Carcase for Hounds records arbitrary appointment of Chiefs. For example, Kingsley neither consults the people nor refers to the native judicial process of succession before he appoints Kahuru Wamai to the throne vacated by Haraka. For exposing "every single terrorist collaborator in the village" (p.20) and adding "a few of his personal enemies to the list for good measure", (p.20) he qualifies to be Chief. Accordingly, he serves the interest of the administration by betraying his people and the cause. The age-old dictum: 'he who pays the piper dictates the tune'

applies here.

Apparently, this is an indictment of Indirect Rule, an administrative arrangement invented and cherished by the British because it gives a wide berth for 'democracy', especially for the natives who must be allowed to 'shape' their destiny.

The significance of Wamai's mental retardation does not escape the reader. Only imbeciles like him can offer their services to the colonial administration for a mere pittance. While Mwangi recognises him as a threat to his generation and even posterity, he points out that he strikes a tragic note all the time. He is neither loved by his people nor respected by the powers which he serves. It is not strange that Kingsley describes him as "a clown - an abbolute loss in an emergency" (p.28).

As the colonial administration realises that its policy of containment which involves the deployment of brute force, propaganda, sabotage and blackmail has failed, it resorts to enticement or liberalism in the form of amnesty. Haraka recognises this ploy as a trap, for the amnesty letter contains the "usual language, the governor's signature and the rest....." (p.52). The quick recognition of this truce by Haraka does not only reveal him as an astute general, it shows that the British have been playing this trick for quite some time. The word "usual" in the

passage provides this clue.

However, the attempted treachery cuts a greater significance when it is observed that liberalism creates the illusion of contentment and equality in the oppressed, thus depriving them of the will to fight. Although Haraka strives very hard to rebuff this imperial design, at independence, power was bequeathed to Kenya's liberal elites, thus setting the stage for a new era of betrayal which the next two chapters examine in detail.

It is not only the colonial administration that betrays the people, its agents are seen to aid and abett the betrayal of the people. In this category is Corporal Njoro who first alerts Chief Kahuru Wamai about the presence of forest fighters in Mwaniki's hut. It is obvious that his lust for material wealth and not dedication to duty motivates him to betray the forest fighters. Consequently, his first question on rousing the Chief is: "shall I get the sergeant's chevron now, Chief?" (p.78).

Corporal Njoro does not want to take part in the invasion of Mwaniki's hut not on grounds of morality but as a result of the deep-seated fear of the forest fighters, which inevitably reveals him as an opportunist who is only interested in cashing-in on the feud between Kahuru Wamai and Mwaniki. For instance,

at "the thought of Haraka, the urine that had frozen in his system thawed out and warmed its wet way down his legs" (p.75). Corporal Njoro therefore represents that class in society which reaps without sowing.

He could also be seen as a ready tool in the hands of the colonial administration. Accordingly, he represents the mindless and directionless forces the colonial administration uses to suppress / genuine national protests. In Going Down River Road and Kill Me Quick, these forces become more aweful, for the new leadership perfects and uses them against protests and political opponents. The Njoros inevitably cut for themselves, malicious, creepy and vicious image during the colonial and neo-colonial eras. In the final analysis, Chief Wamai and Corporal Njoro interest this reader not for the obvious fact that they are betrayors of the cause, they lay the foundation for post-independence betrayals by subverting independence. While the Wamais are given extra powers as custodians of their people, the Njoros make themselves unnecessary tools in their hands so much so that the essence of independence becomes negated. It is the children of this reactionary group that receive good education and they inevitably form the core of the post-independence reactionary elites which Mwangi examines in his neo-colonial novels.

Closer scrutiny reveals that Njoro and Wamai are

not the only traitors in the text: elites and party bureaucrats whose responsibility it is to regulate the revolutionary struggle also betray the cause. In every revolutionary struggle, the bureaucrats usually administer the liberated areas as well as arm the soldiers and co-ordinate the fighting. In Carcase for Hounds, there is not only total absence of party control, there is no prospect for any. Weru reports that:

> It is very bad in Nairobi ..... Most of the top organizers were taken to jail. And there are many more white soldiers arriving in the capital ..... The fighting is heavy in the South ..... And it is very bad on the Aberdares (p.6).

Consequently, General Haraka and his men become isolated, and must from now 'manufacture' arms and food by themselves. General Haraka is disillusioned by the inability of the party to manage the crisis especially when he remembers the Little Leader who educated him on the need to fight, his promises of moral and military support, and finally, the assurance from him that "they were not alone". It is however, not only on this level that the elites betray the War.

The legitimacy of peoples' wars is dependent on their recognition by international bodies and countries, and also the readiness of those countries to accommodate and equip the revolutionary fighters. This aspect of the struggle, popularly known as propaganda which is usually handled by the elites is neglected, and

it puts the 'forest fighters' on the spot. Their isolation from the rest of the world with no food or guns to fight with ultimately precludes them from attaining the set objective and in the end, they are decimated by the colonial forces. Mwangi's response to this appears cynical. He ceases to have faith in elites who are nothing more than cheque-book revolutionaries, and who in more instances than one can 'co-operate' with the colonial administration. Mwangi's cynicism and bitterness are clearly brought out through Haraka after the injury:

> where were his allies, where were they? Would they come to his rescue? The truth dawned with shocking clarity. They were no where. They would not come and they never would come. They simply did not exist. They had never existed in reality .....? Haraka was quite alone now. He, his gang of forest fighters and his little war. Quite alone! (p.102).

While there is sufficient ground to argue that Haraka is being unnecessarily sentimental by refusing to take into cognisance the realities that have confronted the elites in the city, such an argument is not tenable when we realise that the same elites collaborated with the colonial administration at independence.

The lack-lustre attitude of the villagers for whom the forest fighters sacrifice so much is also betrayal. The indispensability of the support of the village people in a revolutionary struggle is

incontestable, it is therefore expected of them to render such services in various ways. However, only Weru appears to commit himself to the struggle by spying for and smuggling shells and beverages to the forest fighters. The General thought that if "every villager brought four shells, there would be two or three hundred white soldiers dead" (p.6). But will they bring? The pessimism which underlines the actions of Haraka early in the novel manifests itself again a few days before Operation Haraka commences. When Kimamo suggests that they move to Weru, a neighbouring district to hide, the General retorts in a sarcastic tone:

> Why don't we try convincing the Chief and his home guards first. They are much nearer and understand our tongue. If our fellow villagers will not understand us, why should we be so sure strangers will? Why should they understand us? (p.53).

The indifference of the villagers, however, should not be construed as acceptance of colonialism. In as much as there is no disputing the indispensability of village support, it is determined by the cost of the war, hence it is fragile and reversible. What obtains in Carcase for Hounds is that, the excesses of the colonial forces have precluded the villagers from expressing their true feelings. For example, for aiding and abetting the forest fighters, Weru gets murdered in the most gruesome way imaginable. Such mindless violence constrains the villagers to stay in

their huts instead of venturing out. Unlike Njoro and Wamai, they do not betray for material benefits.

Mwangi recognises these obstacles as the harsh realities of a guerilla warfare. This is why, in spite of the disillusionment of Haraka and the general apathy, the struggle continues. Rather than use violence to get the allegiance of the people as the colonial administration often does, General Haraka resorts to conscientisation through 'oathing'. This does not only amply bring out the difference between the oppressor and the redeemer, it is Mwangi's recognition of the all time important adage: conviction is better than coercion. This subtle approach makes a mockery of the mindless violence unleashed against the people by the colonial administration, the purveyors of civilization.

Elizabeth Knight in spite of her understanding of Mwangi therefore misses the point when she writes that:

> The oaths that General Haraka administers are not to build up a political movement but are defensive. He uses the oath to keep the villagers of Pinewood and Acacia loyal to him so that they do not betray the gang to the security forces.3

A group behaviour qualifies to be called a movement, especially when it has a guiding ideology as in Carcase for Hounds. While Haraka does not disclose his personal political ambition, it is amply clear that oath-taking goes beyond bribing the villagers to keep their mouths shut: that will be reducing the battle to

between the forest fighters and the colonial forces, while leaving the villagers out. In the first place, oath-taking does not start with the commencement of 'Operation Haraka', hence cannot be described as 'defensive' in the sense Knight implies. The conversation between Mwaniki and General Haraka illustrates this point.

> 'The villagers. We came to initiate them'. The old man thought over that and nodded in a tired way.
> 'Yes, there are few untreated ones', he murmured, smoothing his long, grey beard.
> 'Yes, there are some. That is good. I know all of them. I could tell you the few. I always knew you would .....'
> 'Every body will be doctored', the general told him. 'All the village?' the old man asked the flickering fire.
> 'All', the other answered.
> 'But ....' Mwaniki picked up a burning stump and tapped the fire-stones as he spoke. 'These ones here we have already branded. It is the calves that remain to be marked'. 'It is good for all', the general told him. 'The tribal marks grow dimmer'.

It is obvious that oath-taking is a tribal rite that predates the coming of the white man, hence the reference to 'tribal marks' growing dimmer. What obtains in Carcase for Hounds is therefore a renewal of an old bond as well as a fresh strategem against the enemy.

General Karanga's surrender in the South to the white soldiers is betrayal in as much as "they baited (him) with his photograph" (p.52). For, capitulation in all its ramifications implies that one has reached one's

wit's end. It also means that one has decided not to fight for one's land, and this is tantamount to selling one's birthright. In a curious manner, the General's surrender is analogous to that of Kibara and the General in Taste of Death. Haraka who is perhaps subjected to more dehumanising and treacherous experiences does not betray. Thus, General Karanga's experience suggests that he lacks the capacity to withstand the British treachery and brutality.

The next case of betrayal is brought to the reader through flash-back. Old Mwaniki recounts how Bwana Jackson and other colonial officers tricked them into working in Jackson's tree plantation:

> They came on the promise of farm land, money and school for their children. Tempted thus by the government, they sold their homes in the land of their fathers and came down to the promised land. Promised land!..... One day they cleared the bush, fenced it in and planted maize, potatoes and peas..... The next season the whiteman, Bwana Jackson, brought truck loads of young trees to be planted among the maize and the potatoes in the fields. The following season ..... the trees had to be left in peace and not be hemmed in with potatoes and peas .....! Always moving, moving like a lot of itchy - buttocked nomads from one thicket to the next, only pausing long enough to clear the ground and make it suitable for Bwana Jackson's accursed trees ..... The promised school for the children, huh! Another white lie. It came too late to admit any of his children, and even it was not good ..... They learned nothing..... And in anticipation of things to come, they were taught to handle a pruner at school. A tree-pruner like their fathers used! ..... (pp.59 - 60).

It is not so much the refusal of the colonial

administration
/ to provide a viable education which it claims is the major reason for its presence in Africa nor the payment of wages which are not commensurate with the work done that really constitute the core of betrayal here. It is the surreptitious acquisition of land through fraudulent means which ultimately alienates the people from their source of livelihood and the product of their labour that constitutes the real betrayal. As in Ngugi's Weep Not, Child, the 'natives' are made squaters on their ancestral lands.

It is noticed too that the colonial administration encourages the production of cash crops to the detriment of staple food, thus making the people dependent on the system more and more for their livelihood. This is not surprising because colonialism creates 'a new need' in the colonised thus making him dependent on what it can offer. For instance, Mwaniki and his friends "would have packed up and left Bwana Jackson to clear the jungle himself" (p.60) when they found out he was exploiting them but they could not because of "the children, they had to eat" (p.60).

While the promise of limitless land is obviously a facade, the real motive therefore is the annexation of the peasant economy by international monopoly capital. This aspect of colonial betrayal has dominated the African novel for quite some time now but Mwangi gives it a new dimension by appraising it as a

cyclical phenomenon. The most interesting aspect of this technique is its ability to register multiple responses to betrayal. For instance, while the betraying tactics of the colonial administration have made Mwaniki and Karaka rebels on the one hand, they have made Wamai a collaborator on the other.

So also is the contact between the coloniser and the colonised which is nurtured on inequality. While the coloniser claims to have come on a mission of civilisation intent on elevating the African from his primordial existence, he really does not only negate this philanthropic gesture, he is seen to compartmentalise the colonial world, apportioning to himself in the process, the choice area and herding the native to barren desert. The juxtaposition of "the plush Asian quarters and the monstrous fenced - in mud and tin shanty, Majengo" (p.15) illustrates this point.

However, it is not the marginalisation of the native with style which sharply draws the attention of this reader to yet another level of betrayal: It is the instrument of contact which in Carcase for Hounds is the home guard and by extension, the colonial soldier. The contact man, the bringer of light, definitely ought to do better than "they give oath villagers. Bwana Kepteni. So we shoot" (p.93). Incidentally, and in the words of Frantz Fanon, he is the bringer of violence into the home of the native, thus destroying the peoples'

way of life. Thus, in Carcase for Hounds, the familiar picture is that of home guards and soldiers brutalising the people, especially as seen in the confrontation between the forest fighters and the colonial forces at Pinewood Forest.

Mwangi is by no means the only African novelist who has examined this aspect of betrayal. Mongo Beti in The Poor Christ of Bomba indicts the colonial administration for hiding 'knowledge'. Zacharia, his spokesman explains that Africans welcomed Europeans because they wanted to know the secrets of the white-man's aeroplanes, guns and machines but the Europeans betrayed that mutual understanding by not only hiding knowledge, they conscripted Africans into a labour force solely for their own benefit. While Mongo Beti is satisfied with ridiculing the Europeans through tremendous use of satire, Mwangi examines the dismantlement of the system through a structural struggle which goes beyond social reform, the Mau Mau movement.

Illusions of betrayal too form a prominent part of this novel. In many novels, especially the ones written by Thomas Hardy, nature plays a passive role. More often than not, in a confrontation between the privileged and the underdog, nature seems to watch with indifference. The same cannot be said of the novels of Meja Mwangi. For instance, in Carcase for Hounds, nature does not only play an active role, it appears to

identify with the oppressed in their struggle to free themselves. The supportive role played by nature comes mainly in the form of heavy down pour and subsequent flooding which obliterates traces of the forest fighters. Moreover, land marks such as caves and forests provide useful canopy when protection is greatly needed from the pursuing colonial forces. For example, after the invasion of a police post by Haraka's men:

> ..... the storm proper fell. The water came down in one continuous downpour that drenched everything and everybody in a moment .... As the fighters hurried their laden feet to the safety of the bamboo hideout they were grateful to the rain and the rain-making gods. By the time the storm subsided there would be no trail left by the retreat. Not a trace (p.38).

Such benevolent acts by nature are rife, and they go a long way to frustrate the efforts of Captain Kingsley and his men. For instance, as he makes to chase the forest fighters:

> Hailstones crashed on the windscreen and played a depressing tattoo on the tarpaulins covering the lorries. Visibility was very poor. In the glaring head lights, large brown splashes of mud and water danced on the dirt road surface. Skidding on the misty road was dangerous; they drove at a crawling pace.

Captain Kingsley too, is sufficiently aware of this apparent treachery of nature, and in resignation, he addresses his soldiers quietly:

> when the rain allowed and the murk let go our wheels, we searched around for Haraka and his blasted Mau Mau (p.9).

The dense tropical forest which holds an exotic appeal for Kingsley also shields the forest fighters from the low-flying helicopters. The consistency is so obvious that this reader can hardly miss the support offered by nature to the forest fighters. However, the sustaining of an injury by General Haraka which inevitably leads to other unpleasant consequences makes the General and his men to believe that nature has turned its back on them at an hour they badly need its support.

For instance, although the bullet wounds impede Haraka's escape from the precincts of Pinewood Forest station, it is River Liki more than anything that the General identifies as his major obstacle. He feels "holed up, unable to retreat up the mountain, frozen on the spot ...." (p.100) (while) "the Liki roared sarcastically, reminding the general that it held the bridle" (p.100). And naturally, he is immeasurably disillusioned, and this feeling is brought out clearly in this passage:

> The weather, that always reliable, unquestioning ally, had started letting him down recently. Had it not been for that unforeseen storm his troops would have been above the bamboo line by now. But the deluge had flooded the rivers beyond all possibility of fording and he has been forced to make a temporary camp quite close to the village.

In anguish, he sees "defeat, complete annihilation and death glaring back at him" (p.102). While the question

of defeat here is debatable, the feeling of betrayal is an illusion, for it is the seemingly betraying Liki that saves the forest fighters from being hewn as carcases 'fit for hounds' by the soldiers. However, Haraka and his men do not realise this, hence their lack of appreciation.

In the final analysis, nature is the "reliable unquestioning ally" of the forest fighters, and this is significant because it is the only party in the dispute that is not vulnerable to colonial attacks. Nature determines the progress of the war. Mwangi however, recognises how far nature's support can be relied upon, as such his characters do not revert to worshipping of gods as a way out of the deluge.

The anxious moment by the Liki side avails this reader the opportunity of understanding the way Haraka's mind works. Mwangi makes this moment of reflection more profound by weaving the past and the present into one continuous tragic story. As the man breaks down psychologically and physically, the myth of invincibility also breaks, laying bare in the process Haraka the man - vulnerable like any other man. It is not by accident that Haraka remembers the Little Leader at this moment: the latter symbolises the struggle as well as being the turning point in Haraka's life. However, now, Haraka is tempted to believe that the Leader has lured him into starting something he cannot

finish. Had the Leader not repeatedly explained that "they were not alone". (p.101). But:

> where are the fighters and the people when he needed them? Why didn't they bring him more guns and more men and help him ward off the vultures ..... why didn't they stand by him in the cold darkness and hold his hand and say 'You are not alone' (p.101).

General Haraka feels inevitably betrayed by what he regards as his people's indifference. This feeling though strong, does not motivate him to abandon the struggle mid-stream. More than any other time, he intensifies the struggle through his Lieutenants against the colonialists at this moment. This in itself is a statement by Mwangi that leaders should not abandon struggle half way because their neighbours have been found wanting.

It is also possible to ask whether his people have left "him wounded, to fight the soldiers and their automatic weapons" (p.101) alone. At the risk of repetition and contradiction, could it not be that his people have been cowed by the aweful colonial forces that cordon every part of their village? Even "Kimamo had never thought so many soldiers existed anywhere on earth, so many guns" (p.133). One inevitably concludes that Haraka is not betrayed in the sense Mwangi wants the reader to believe. If more often than not he presents him as betrayed, it is an attempt to show the two sides of the liberation struggle. It

is necessary that his past successes, especially at Timau Police Post be matched with a measure of failure. Anything short of this will make him a larger-than-life figure. This not withstanding, a prominent lesson emerges from all these. At independence there were two broad categories of citizens: those that fought and those that did not. And because the fighting was not as total as it should be, it fails to produce a truly independent nation.

The surrealistic approach employed by Mwangi in Haraka's moments of trial is most appropriate because the border line between illusion and reality is very thin. For instance, he conjures up enemies in his mind from time to time, and each time he sees defeat staring him in the face. And each moment of defeat accentuates the feeling of betrayal. For instance:

> Facing the enemy in the darkness, in his mind he was quite alone. Where were his allies? ..... They were no where ..... He had been swindled and thrown to the dogs. He felt cheated and fooled (p.102).

Whether illusory or real, this feeling persists for so long because the General does not have the benefit of listening to Captain Kingsley and the villagers recount his exploits.

The General's capability for accommodating pain is legendary. He stands stoically as waves of pain wash over him. At some moments too, he cuts the picture

of a tethered ram about to be slaughtered:

> Every now and then cold shivers ran through his solid frame.... (Kimamo) had milked the wound of its weakening pus soon after the general woke up that morning. He had squeezed the ugly lips until the granite eyes watered, and a mixture of blood and water oozed out of the wound. The general did not even wince once (pp.96 and 108).

This stoic resistance soon crumbles under persistent waves of pain. Although, like Kariuki and Christ in Taste of Death and The Holy Bible respectively, he tries hard not to submit to pain , his flesh betrays him, often throwing him into a paroxysm of fainting. Clearly, "he did not wish to be destroyed (but) the usual fighting determination" had been replaced by "a tortured struggle against subjection to pain""(pp.103 and 115). Proof of pain's conquest over the General is clearly explained in this passage:

> ..... The general had lost all his perseverance and now moaned pitifully, tears streaming at times down his pain-twisted face (p.115).

In spite of the agonising pain which reduces Haraka to the ashes of the original self, Mwangi believes that:

> the general would never die. Nothing would kill him. The soldiers had failed. They would all die and leave him mumbling unintelligibly to himself by the fire. He would never die (p.132).

This is in recognition of the fact that the struggle is

not waged on the physical front alone. Mwangi himself admits in an interview with Kunapipi that, "eventually, when Haraka, the hero of the novel, gets killed, his spirit symbolically lives on ..... The fact that one little band was wiped out did not mean that the movement died".[4]

It is observed that in his delirious moments Haraka reduces the confrontation to between himself and Chief Wamai. This does not in any way narrow the scope of the struggle, for in many ways the two figures are representative. While Haraka symbolises the struggle, Wamai personifies bondage. It is at this moment too that Haraka appears to have betrayed his lieutenants through their execution. Although the price of failure was death, and "there was nothing anybody could do without a break of regulations" (p.122), the General should have known better than assigning his men an impossible task, that is bringing the head of Chief Wamai. "Kimamo knew" that the men being sent out would either "get killed or captured" for they were like "a flock of sheep being picked out for slaughter" (p.123). At a glance this reader is tempted to think the General acted under delirium, but this is hardly the case considering the precision and logicality of his actions. Which ever way one looks at it, the executions cheat Kingsley out of torturing the fighters.

Consideration must be given to the case of

Kimamo, who in spite of his fighting skill fails the Mau Mau movement when his services are most needed. It is no secret that Haraka imbues his men with leadership qualities, especially Kimamo. It is expected therefore, although the General appears invincible, that some one would take the mantle of leadership when he is indisposed. But Kimamo rather than re-organising the men "had rotted away in the General's side" (p.123), thus destoying the last shreds of resistance to British colonialism.

He adopts a defeatist attitude to an issue that demands prompt decision and action. His escape which is "checked by the over-flowing Nanyuki River" (p.117) exposes him as some one who lacks the will to lead although the followers are willing. It is also an indictment of lack of self-confidence because it is capable of destroying even a well disciplined regular army. The bursting River Nanyuki seems to be telling Kimamo that facing of practical realities which involves the elimination of an 'insane' General is the solution. Mwangi's handling of a case of succession in a liberation struggle inevitably invites comparison with Pepetela's in Mayombe, a Novel of the Angolan Struggle. While both of them agree that a good leader should be fearless, intelligent and charismatic as we see in Haraka and 'Fearless', Pepetela does not think the death of such a leader should constitute the extinction of the remaining survivors as Mwangi suggests in his novel.

This stems from the belief that no matter how important, a single individual does not rank very much when compared to a group. Pepetela therefore believes that the death of such a seemingly indispensable figure, though painful, only paves way for the younger generation who inevitably must carry on the struggle. This explains why 'Struggle' takes over the role of 'Fearless' immediately after the latter's death. Although this reader is tempted to agree with Mwangi that the "spirit symbolically lives on" after the decimation of "one little band", it apparently is not the most progressive way of demonstrating that the struggle continues.

Further example of weak leadership generating weak followership or total disarray manifests itself in Pinewood Forest Station on the night Haraka storms the village. Chief Kahuru Wamai has never had confidence in himself as such he fails to imbue his men with leadership qualities, and this is partly responsible for the home guards' lackadaisical attitude to duty. This poor attitude is responsible for the easy entry and administering of oath to the villagers by the forest fighters. But for Njoro who stumbles on them accidentally, Haraka would have performed the rites without trouble. The author reports that "the home guards had retired to their huts after the early hours of the curfew" (p.55). Although this negligence of duty is favourable to the forest fighters, it is nevertheless a betrayal of the colonial administration

which insists that the forest fighters must be kept at bay.

Inadvertent actions which attract negative repercussions are also considered betrayals because they preclude the attainment of set objectives. Of particular interest to this reader are the forest fighters who are charged with taking care of the trench but inadvertently push it into the trench. The loss of the bridge symbolises the severance of links with the outside world, and this implies total loss, for the forest fighters cannot survive in a vacuum. The gravity of the culprits' offence is matched by the instant punishment metted to them by the General himself.

Captain Kingsley's full-proof 'Operation Haraka' fails to attain its objective because Haraka eludes him in the end. Consequently, he passes the blame to the "blasted troops" (p.128) who, according to him, "had left that slim, fatal gap" (p.128) thus betraying his efforts. Unknown to Kingsley, Operation Haraka is a tremendous success, for his soldiers have single handedly wiped out the remnants of Haraka's army. But Kingsley would never know, and neither would the ubiquitous Brigadier Thames. The only person who would have known is the gum-chewing "innocent private" (p.130) but he is "thinking about his girl back home in Liverpool. The humid jungle, the birds and the trees (that) saw this tiny, gigantic slip ..... would never tell. Never"

(p.130) because nature is an 'unquestioning ally'.

The failure of the operation is a loss for Kingsley on several planes among which are the opportunity to revenge on Haraka for hitting him back when he was a District Officer, and also a chance to prove his mettle before the Emergency Council who on more than one occasion has expressed its dissatisfaction about his conduct of the war.

In a paradoxical manner, Mwangi ensures victory for Kingsley and Haraka without their knowing it. While Kingsley scores military victory over Haraka, Haraka defeats him psychologically by remaining 'invincible'. This is victory for the Mau Mau as a whole because according to James Hadley Chase, fear is the key that unlucks the purses and hearts of men. The ambigous treatment accorded this part of the novel is proof of Mwangi's maturity in prose writing.

Carcase for Hounds is solemn and dense in thematic discourse, characterization and narrative technique. It evokes the ambiance of Mau Mau struggle in its final stages. Mwangi employs linear exposition with occasional flash back and double plot in his narrative. Consequently, the novel is reputed for its compactness and seriousness of tone which depicts the gravity of the struggle.

A combination of conscientization which is a more

lasting way of winning converts, the compactness and lucidity of Carcase for Hounds makes it a better novel than Taste of Death. Critics are unanimous about this. For instance, Eustace Palmer writes that it is "a triumph of artistry and a minor masterpiece".[5] He also adds that "the author's powers of description are possibly surer than in Kill Me Quick".[6] Elizabeth Knight declares too that "there is some evidence of the more mature style"[7] in the novel than his earlier ones.

Mwangi's handling of the story goes a long way to reveal his perception of his history and society, for he re-interpretes history from the point of view of the people. And in doing so, he does not get unnecessarily romantic. He presents a struggle in which the oppressed and the exploited are determined to free themselves from the clutches of a reactionary local and foreign bourgeois capitalist class.

This objective is attained following the capitulation of the British forces, thus ushering a new era, independence. Thus, if "the naked truth of decolonization..." which Carcase for Hounds is all about, "... evokes for us the searing bullets and blood stained knives...", what then is independence like? Is it the new Cannan of which the African leaders spoke profusely at independence? Or is it another cycle of betrayals? This 'mystery', Kill Me Quick the subject of the next chapter probably unravels.

NOTES

1. Meja Mwangi, Carcase for Hounds, London: Heinemann, 1974, p.13. Subsequent page references are in the text.

2. Eustace Palmer, The Growth of the African Novel, London: Heinemann, 1979, p.312.

3. Eldred Jones ed., African Literature Today Number 13, London: Heinemann and African Publishing Company, 1983, p.151.

4. Kunapipi Vol.I Number I, Denmark: Dangaroo Press, 1979, p.70.

5. Eustace Palmer, op.cit., pp.310 & 314.

6. Ibid., p.310.

7. Eldred Jones ed., op.cit., p.148.

8. Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, London: Penguin, 1963, p.28.

Chapter 4

Kill Me Quick

In Taste of Death and Carcase for Hounds, Mwangi dwells upon the Mau Mau movement or the liberation struggle, but in Kill Me Quick, he focuses almost entirely on the post-independence problems which like the colonial ones are predominantly treacherous in nature.

Kill Me Quick is a pathetic story of two youths, Meja and Maina in the slums of Nairobi. They migrate from their rustic homes to the city after a brilliant educational career, intent on getting jobs only to be confronted by the unreceptive socio-economic system. Although they want to stay straight, the brutish city eventually forces them into crime and their inevitable destruction. Maina, for instance has never wanted to be a thief:

> All my friends became thieves and robbers. I would have done the same too but I was too cowardly to break into houses at night.[1]

Contrasted with the "ragged beggars (are) the smart pot-bellied executives" (p.1) who revel in licentious and unacceptable opulence. They are violent, greedy and indifferent to the plight of the poor which invariably made Mwangi to write Kill Me Quick. According to him, the novel is intended to shock this category of people out of their smugness and

complacency with the realities of back street life. He laments that:

> They don't know what is happening just in the street behind the one they are on. And this is what I'm trying to show. They don't know it was that hard. That's the kind of realization I'm trying to bring out.2

Apparently, Mwangi's concern is the disparity in the life styles of the rich and the poor, and the continuous indifference of the leadership to this. In the novel, Maina cries out in anguish:

> Eating from waste bins, sleeping in them and hanging around the back streets, as though we have no homes. And nobody seems to understand or care (p.27).

While some have in superfluity, others wallow in abject penury. The juxtaposition of these parallels brings out clearly the theme of betrayal in the novel.

Kill Me Quick however, is not just an expose of the moral turpitude of the rich, it is a serious indictment of a system that nurtures inequality as a pattern of its development. Thus by writing Kill Me Quick, Mwangi hopes to correct the ills that plague his society. According to him:

> The purpose ..... is to change the audience's outlook on life, on what is happening. But coming to Kill Me Quick; those boys in the street, they are every where. You are passing them all the time and rarely notice them. Now if one could notice them, then may be the society would start to realize just what is going around them, what could be done about it.

> Or at least the individual might try to be more - not gentle, more considerate when they are dealing with these kind of people.[3]

In Mwangi's view, betrayal is a familiar feature in this society and people pretend not to notice it. He represents this aptly in the novel when the general society symbolised by "the smart pot-bellied executives" (p.1) refuses to respond to the pathetic life style of the boys on the back streets of Nairobi.

Mwangi addresses himself in the novel to the question of human relationships because human relationships determine the nature of society. He reveals that the new elites which comprise men in the army, politics, academics, civil service, business and commerce and traditional institutions are indifferent to the plight of the general populace, adding that they merely step into the shoes of the erstwhile colonial masters. E.A. Brett readily agrees with this view when he points out that:

> The emerging indigenous classes perceived reality in terms of inherited inequality, blocked economic opportunities and social discrimination.[4]

In view of all this, this reader inevitably concludes that the society is fashioned out of a capitalist economy which alienates rather than pool together. Consequently, the foul odour which emanates from the street gutters symbolises the nauseating legacy of the elites; it is also a perpetual reminder to them and

the deprived that there is need for change.

Betrayal obtains in the neo-colonial arrangement, and its institutions. For example, one of the leading institutions in which betrayal occurs is the Civil Service. It does not and cannot offer employment to Meja and Maina after a brilliant educational career. Betrayal is made more manifest when it is considered that the boys' training is ostensibly designed for the Civil Ser vice. Maina gives up looking for a job after his spirited efforts are met with rebuff and violence. He reminisces:

> 'Well, I tried to get a job', he said and shrugged. '"What qualifications?"' they would ask me. "Second Division Certificate ...." I would start to say but before I had finished the man behind the desk would roar, "Get out, we have no jobs"' (p.1).

Meja who against the advice of Maina goes looking for a job suffers bodily harm too. In the office of the Manager.

> He was still shouting, 'maths ..... first ..... chemistry ..... physics' in confused order when they threw him out minus a few buttons plus a few bruises here and there. It took two big bullies and the Manager to toss him through the back door (p.7).

The Civil Service does not only betray by its inability to offer jobs to those who are qualified for them, there is apparent lack of protocol and etiquette. Of greater significance is the violence with which the

applicants are rebuffed. It is microscopic of the general violence that pervades this society. From all indications, too, the society does not appreciate excellence. Eustace Palmer observes appropriately that:

> The experiences of Meja and Maina are thus a paradigm, not just of the Kenyan situation, but of that in the whole of Africa where hordes of youths educated up to the school certificate discover that in spite of their qualifications the economic and social situation ensures that they have to roam the streets unemployed for years. The consequence is not just tremendous waste of potential but a loss of faith in the value of education.5

This inevitably pre-empts the question; how relevant is their education to the society in which they live? Their education falls sharply below the prescriptions of Simon Bolivar who says that:

> Education and culture are the most sound for general happiness and the most solid foundations for peoples freedom.6

They must not be held responsible, however. If anything, Meja and Maina, and the entire people of Kenya cannot be said to have had sound education; for, the format and content of their education do not reflect the cultural background of Kenya. And Ngugi insists that it is the right of every child to grow under the umbrella of his native education.[7] In Kenya, and by extension, in other African countries, the right to

learn under one's 'native imaginative literature' is denied. This aspect of betrayal like many others has its root in the immediate colonial past. Education, idealistically speaking is designed to enhance individual and national growth. In Kenya, this is hardly so, as education is as the colonial masters planned and left it - clerical, scholastic, and seignorial. Consequently, it is neither attuned to the times nor the culture of the people, therefore incapable of transforming the backward economy. According to Ngugi:

> The content of our syllabi, the approach to and presentation of the literature, the persons and the machinery for determining the choice of texts, and their interpretation, were all an integral part of imperialism in its classical colonial phase and they are today an integral part of the same imperialism; but now in its neo-colonial phase.8

Naturally, the products of this 'obsolete' educational system are at variance with the socio-economic realities of their country. Betrayal becomes more pronounced with the refusal of the new leadership to change this educational system after knowing full well that:

> The root of human troubles is defective education, and the cure for those troubles is education that is not defective.9

Consideration must be given to the immediate effects of an education policy that has no relevance to the

peoples' needs. It makes learning a drudgery. Maina recounts his ordeal in school before passing his examination:

> I carried a book everywhere, even into the dining hall. There was also a time I carried a book into the toilet ..... So you see I am through with books .... (p.3).

More disparaging is the negation of educational essence. Rather than uniting the people and uplifting the nation, education creates want, hunger and despair. It ensures that the Kenyan and his culture are tied to the apron strings of the West.

Mwangi also indicts the new leadership for making the cost of education far beyond the reach of the poor. It is only once in a while that an average family can afford to sponsor a child in school, and this guzzles the entire family wealth. Maina recounts:

> When I was sent to s chool, it was in the hope that one day I would get a good job and become independent. My father made no secret of this ..... I took my share of his wealth with my education. He told me this too. It would be cheating if I went back because the others did not go to school ..... (p.27).

Making education a special privilege is betrayal of the poor people who contributed in no small measure to the winning of independence. It is equally betraya l of national aspirations. The leadership explains that the nation is grossly undeveloped and creates an urgent necessity for rectifying the situation,

but its actions directly sabotage this 'urgent necessity'.

The experiences of Meja and Maina are microscopic of a national disaster. Maina says that:

> ..... there was no job for anybody anywhere. The same story everywhere (p.2).

This necessitates a closer look at the economy; how it is run and the results it has achieved, since these directly have bearing on the nation's capacity to absorb or reject applicants. Kenya is a neo-colonial country, and according to Nkrumah;

> A state can be said to be a neo-colonialist or client-state if it is made de jure and dependent de facto. It is a state where politica l power lies in the conservative forces of the former colony and where economic power remains under the control of international finance capital. 10

Ngugi adds that:

> Neo-colonialism means the continued creation and encouragement of subservient weak capitalistic economic structures, captained or overseered by a native ruling class. 11

Like most neo-colonial countries, underdevelopment in all spheres remains a major problem in Kenya. The national bourgeoisie that came into power at independence inherited an economy that is tied to the apron-strings of international capital; it therefore lacks the wherewithal of the alien bourgoisie which it has

replaced. It is a helpless parody of the West that tries to improve its condition at the expense of the masses. The national bourgeoisie is not engaged in production, neither does it make positive attempts at doing this. The distributive trade which it inherited at independence is what it develops. Consequently, no attempt is made to evolve indigenous technology. This makes the state a hewer of wood and drawer of water' for the metropolis: Frantz Fanon describes "the psychology of the national bourgeoisie (as) that of the business man, not that of a captain of industry",[12] greedy and individualistic. Instead of identifying with the goals of the masses so that wealth could be created for the benefit of all citizens, the bourgeoisie allies itself with international capital. Thus, the economy is not anchored on a new revolutionary footing. Consequently, it is incapable of generating jobs for the fast growing population which is dominated by the work-ready youth.
The effects are all too obvious; unemployment, high crime rate and accelerated growth of slums. In many respects, it is a betraya l of those who had faith in independence, and so fought for it. In the final analysis, what the leadership calls national growth is a sharp socio-economic contrast between the have and the have-nots. The system accumulates wealth in the hands of the former while it generalizes poverty in the hands of the latter. This sharp contrast is well

expressed in Kill Me Quick. The sleek limousines and mansions for instance are juxtaposed with Razor's shacks and the horny-toed Meja and Maina.

The ultimate aim of Kenya's educational policy, which obviously is a part of the chaotic economy is therefore to mould a native middle class that functions as a conveyor belt between the periphery and the metropolis. Their taking up of such positions automatically blocks chances for the majority of the people including Meja and Maina. This is amply demonstrated by the two belligerent managers whom Meja meets for work. While the first manager is dramatic in 'tossing' Meja out, the second manager employs violence. Meja "was still shouting, 'maths.... first .... chemistry .... physics', in confused order when they threw him out minus a few buttons and plus a few bruises here and there" (p.7). And this apparently is the reason why he "hated the cruel world which had no place for people with one points in maths, physics and chemistry" (p.8).

Consequently, the city which breeds this bourgeoisie is portrayed as a cruel, destructive and treacherous force. In addition to the destruction of young peoples faith, the city exploits as well as introduces new values that are inimical to the collective good of the society. For instance, it does not recognise merit, not even people "with one points in maths,

physics and chemistry". Meja and Maina left their villages ostensibly to get jobs in the city because their training requires nothing less; it however offers violence and hunger, thus destroying the faith the boys had in it. Maina's initial expectations are relevant here:

> I came out here raw and proud the way you are .... I thought I would get a job and earn six - seven hundred shillings a month. Then I would get a house, a radio, good clothes and food (p.1).

The author juxtaposes these evanescent dreams with the realities of the moment: the crunching of fungi-infested cakes from dust bins to bring out the metaphor of failure. For the boys, especially Maina, it is a total loss of faith in a system that offers next to nothing. Although he knows that he has "a right to something better if only for the effort (he) put into those examination weeks" (p.3), he warns Meja that "there is no point in trying for a job" (p.3) because there are no jobs any where.

Although inextricably intertwined, the destruction of the boys is corollary to their loss of faith in the city. The city appears to offer them two options; they thrive in the backstreets until they go with the murk or come to the main streets and get picked by the police. A closer look reveals that the city offers only one option, destruction. Where ever they hide, "the green van will come and whisk them off

to Number Nine" the moment they come of age. Their waiting on the backstreets can therefore be likened to a tragic state of metamorphosis. Eustace Palmer shares this view when he writes that:

> the city appears as a most impersonal and unfriendly place where all the odds are heavily stacked against the boys. 13

While Elizabeth Knight expresses a similar view, she also explains the factors responsible for the rural - urban migration. In her own words:

> the urban drift is depicted as being due to the poverty of the rural areas together with the superficial attractiveness..... 14

The major concern here is not so much the reasons that drive the youths to the city, but the extent of damage done to them by the city. Even Palmer who demonstrates a good understanding of Mwangi's novels misses the extent of this damage. Thus he writes:

> In Kill Me Quick; Mwangi displays not just great insight into social forces but also psychological understanding in the portrayal of his heroes. He is careful to distinguish between them. Thus Meja who bearing the author's name, is probably idealized, is more compassionate, generous and respectful towards elders and authority than Maina. There is a basic softness, gentlemanliness and innocence about him which makes his experiences in the tough backstreets among the dust bins of Nairobi all the more pathetic. One feels that he simply was not made for this kind of life ..... On the other hand, Maina displays a flair for mischief and low cunning suggesting that he probably has criminal potential in him. He looks like the typical street-corner boy, displaying a capacity for violence and viciousness particularly in the scene where the old man

> Boi first meets them with a proposition. In a very real sense Maina seems to be Meja's evil angel, throwing all the blame for his misdemeanours on the latter, luring him into all kinds of dubious practices culminating in the accident in which Meja is all but killed 15

There are many loopholes to be picked in this critique because it concerns itself with surface attitudes only. While it is undisputably true that Mwangi displays a "psychological understanding in the portrayal of his heroes", it amounts to travialization of serious issues for Palmer to insinuate that Mwangi idealizes Meja because they bear the same name. It is also totally wrong of Palmer to describe Maina as "Meja's evil angel", when in reality he is his guardian angel. For instance, Maina does not only orientate Meja theoretically into the realities of the city he saves him from dying by offering him food and succour. According to Meja, it was Maina "who had prevented (him) from giving up living" (p.130).

Maina does not have "criminal potential in him" as Palmer suggests, so the question of luring Meja into crime should not arise. In his orientation speech to Meja at the beginning of the novel, he says:

> '..... My friends went into the main streets and snatched purses and they are almost all of them in prison now, for one reason or another. Me, I turned into the backstreets and thrived. There isn't much competition for existence here, except with the mongrels and mongrels do not know how to open closed back doors' (p.2)

Meja himself testifies that:

> 'More than anything else, Maina had always wanted to remain clean ..... He would rather eat from dust bins than steal. I knew him well .....' (p.149).

Although he tells Meja that there are no jobs to be had, he does not stop him from looking for one. He is not only vindicated, Meja gets beaten up as Maina has earlier predicted.

While Maina apparently has a hand "in the accident in which Meja is all but killed", he alone must not be held responsible for the tragedy, especially when it is remembered that he has consistently warned Meja to "keep away from the main streets" (p.4). While this reader is hard-put to deny that Maina is 'cunning, vicious and mischievous', he recognises quickly too that this is as a result of the erosion of his morals by the city. The city replaces the in-built sentimentality which is a common feature of the rural people with guardedness and hardness, necessary qualities of survival in an indifferent city like Nairobi. Meja who undoubtedly from the beginning is a gentleman still retains some of the rustic virtues because he is fresh from the village. As the realities of the city hit him hard, he equally gets vicious, perhaps more vicious and cunning than Maina. This reader inevitably concludes that the difference in their carriage at the beginning of the novel is an ample demonstration of the corrosive influence of the city.

Beyond this, it is essential to understand the structure and role of the city in relation to the system of production. Nairobi serves the primary function of assembling raw materials acquired at very cheap rate from villages. This culture of betrayal and exploitation, needless to say, is perpetuated by 'the managers' who constitute part of the ruling class. Norma Perchonock captures the mood appropriately when she writes:

> ... the establishment of cities necessitates the existence of a ruling class (usually urban-based) which survives by appropriating the products of the producing classes in society whether rural or urban.16

One of the easily noticeable characteristics of the exploiter is perverted love. This necrophylic outlook stems from the determination of the exploiter to milk when the going is good, and to abandon when it is hazardous. In Kill Me Quick, the villagers after witnessing a severe drought decide to send "a delegation of the most respected old men ... to the city to ask for help" (p.127). In the end the co-operative society does not only refuse to offer help to the villagers when their harvest is ruined by drought, it "moved its offices and left no address" (p.127). This act of betrayal defines the nature of relationship between the urban and rural areas. In the final analysis, this reader finds Neil McEwan's

conclusion: the "novel Kill Me Quick tells of the misfortunes of two unemployed youths for whom there are no prospects in modern Kenya"[17] rather parochial. The issues involved are definitely more than the 'misfortunes of two unemployed youths'. Inevitably, Kill Me Quick tells the story of a lost country and its people; for hardly is any part of the economy or group of persons exempted from the unending tragedy. At the risk of repetition, it is a vicious cycle which leaves even the emergent elite permanently lackeys of the West.

The metal buyer who is a part of this process is an allegory of the 'middle man' and his greed. The national bourgeoisie which is associated with this role, does not and cannot transform the economy because it is content with playing the historic role of the intermediary. While it emulates the Western bourgeoisie in exploitation, it fails to invent, discover or pioneer projects as is traditional with the class. In the words of Fanon, it symbolises "the incapability of the national middle class to fulfil its historic role of bourgeoisie".[18] In the story, Meja desperately wants to deal with the "big dealer the source of money, but he was so high up there somewhere" (p.11). Apparently, Meja fails to realise that the metal man (middle man) is not an aberration, he is synonymous with the whole process of a capitalist economy, for in the final analysis it is the "big dealer" that

guzzles everything.

If the metal buyer is a part of a treacherous economic system, so is the white farmer "who needed two youths, two cheap youths to work for him" (p.13) in his "plain flat and windy farm" (p.16). The farmer wants maximum performance from his labourers for the minimum wages. In pursuance of this doctrine, Meja and Maina are quartered in over-crowded and insect-invested huts "to save land for the more important wheat and maize fields" (p.16).

More treacherous are the actions of the African leadership which thrusts thousands of acres of farmland to a settler w hile Maina's parents who fought for the land are confined to "two acres of land" (p.27). Maina explains to Meja:

> ..... I cannot go back home because there is no place to go back home to. My father owns two acres of land. Not even big enough for even one little hut. So he has bought a house in the village and uses the land for food. I have three brothers and two sisters at home. The bit of land is not enough (p.27).

The peasants did not fight so that their lands could be appropriated by a few settlers. Elizabeth Knight observes that the consolidation of large farmlands in the hands of a few speculators at the expense of the peasants makes "the frequent government calls for the unemployed to return to the land sound very hollow."[19]

The huts in which Meja and Maina live while at

the "flat and windy" (p.16) farm deserve more than a cursory glance not because they illustrate the heartlessness of their employer: Mwangi apparently uses them as an allegory in order to make far-reaching comments on the nature of betrayal in his society. A textual summary is inevitable here. The boys are given a hut each on arrival at the farm, but:

> the great problem then was which one to move into ..... both leaned to one side, and the thatch of each was old, mice infested and leaking. Now they came to the details that mattered.
>
> Meja's hut was flea-land and the whole circular wall practically plastered w ith bed bugs. The floor lay as when it was first created with the rest of the world, rough, corrugated and at least a foot deep in fine dust. Evil black soot hung from the roof like giant stalactites, so heavy that the thatching was caving ..... Maina's hut was a little better in a few respects. It was relatively round, less sooty, and mysteriously, absolutely flea-free. Mice and bed bugs there were but these were less famished and consequently less hostile according to Maina's reasoning. Thus Maina's hut was voted the most habitable.... (pp.16-17).

The huts complement each other, none could be said to be better than the other which makes the reader to believe that Mwangi has used them to represent the colonial and neo-colonial periods. This in itself is a strong indictment of the new leadership which is responsible for the sham state of affairs. There are other evidences to corroborate the claim that the huts represent two great periods in Kenya's history. For example, Boi, the self-appointed guardian of the boys, for instance, cuts the image of a neo-colonial

master: he is bossy and patronising. According to the boys, "he was fatherly in a bossy way, self-assured, and shouted unnecessary orders all the time" (p.19). Colonial masters at the dawn of independence usually promise not to interfere in the internal matters of the emergent states, only to be found neck-deep in the affairs of such countries shortly afterward. Thus, neo-colonial masters are found to be dishonest. Boi cuts such an image too. For instance, he "had told the boys that the whiteman would leave them alone to do their job. That was a lie" (p.16). In a metropolis - periphery relationship, economic interests supersede moral matters. This is why, in Kill Me Quick, although Boi has "taken the boys over as his adopted sons" (p.18), he makes them pay for his "two tin mugs, two tin plates, two aluminium cooking pots and two old blankets and a collection of sacks to sleep on" (p.18). Neo-colonial masters are also arrogant, paternalistic and self-righteous. Even when it is clear that they have evolved policies which will benefit them alone, they make it look as if it is for the other party's sake. Boi has these traits as well; so much so that "he made no effort to hide the fact they would be required to honour him" (p.18). He is convinced that "if they followed his advice they would do well. If they didn't, anything could happen" (p.18).

In a manner characteristic of neo-colonial masters,

he foments trouble for the boys when they refuse to dance to his whims and caprices, thus betraying his traditional role of a 'custodian'. This interpretation is only credible as far as allegory is concerned, for Boi can equally be assessed as a plaintive character. On this level too, he betrays the boys. He blames and punishes them for a misfortune he causes for himself. He makes them do over-work without commensurate renumerations. For instance, "Maina washed the floor of the kitchen until his shoulders ached, and Meja watered the vegetable gardens until the shoots were almost throwing up water" before he gives them permission to rest. This is betrayal of trust considering that Boi was willing to help "if they wanted any assistance" (p.17).

Even though he succeeds in getting the boys sacked through a master-stroke of a trap, he does not get fulfilment. He "vanished trembling in the direction of the kitchen" (p.40) just before the boss pronounced his sentence on the 'culprits'. The whole guerilla warfare between Boi and the boys exposes them as people who are incapable of identifying their real enemy. And even if they do, he is too strong for them. Rather than attacking him they therefore resort to fighting one another.

While in Carcase for Hounds, Mwangi creates the illusion that nature is an agent of betrayal, in Kill Me Quick, it is Maina and Meja who bear this

burden. Maina, for instance, is confronted by the whole village through one man for betraying the trust reposed in him by his parents. Although the man does not know that he is addressing Maina, he declares that the latter on whom large sums were spent by the parents, abandon them after getting a job in the city. According to the man, Maina's parents:

> ..... squandered all their money on sending one of the boys to school. The boy read well, so I hear. He was the good type. But when he finished school, he went to the city, got himself a job and became spoilt. He never came back ..... the old man sent his remaining sons out to the city to look for the lost one. They too never came back (p.135).

While this is an admonition of a 'wayward' Maina for 'betraying' his parents, it is equally a castigation of the leadership for making education unnecessarily expensive.

The old man displays his aggression on the 'enquiring stranger' because he has the attributes of a city man, but the enquiring stranger who is Maina thinks "the man was laughing at him because he went to school and was dressed in rags" (p.134). The man's controlled animosity is also a reflection of the general alienation between rural and urban people. This makes Maina's case a pitiful one: the city rejects him for not possessing the 'pre-requisite qualifications' of membership and the rural people reject him for no reason other than the fact he allows himself to be swallowed by the city. In spite of this dilemma, he is

still the brilliant and 'conscientious student' the villagers used to know. His sensitivity and morality are amply displayed as he explains to Meja why he cannot go home:

> ..... I took my share of his wealth with my education. He told me this too. You see why I can't go back there? It would be cheating if I went back because the others did not go to school. They would not want me back there (pp.27 - 8).

This passage makes the reader sympathise with Maina instead of joining hands with the villagers to castigate him.

Meja too falls in the category of those who are construed to betray. Like Maina , he cannot face his parents because he feels he has betrayed them. The sense of guilt is accentuated by the criticism he receives from his sister at the road junction; she functions as his judge without her knowing it. He collapses, recovers, and escapes from the village. Meja and Maina are therefore used to illustrate the dilemma of the later day secondary school leavers, and this also is a comment on an economy which is structured in such a manner that it is incapable of offering jobs to deserving youths. Mwangi also reveals the ignorance of the villagers who do not hesitate to condemn the boys, who they think are in league with the mainstream elites. This reader, however, knows that the boys have no jobs. Ngugi uses such jobless people in Petals of Blood to start a mass protest,

while Mwangi, in spite of his strong admonition of the leadership does not do such a thing. Maina, Meja, and virtually all members of Razor's gang are destroyed thereby obliterating any hope of a mass struggle as obtains in his colonial novels. This is not the same as saying that Mwangi is content with chronicling the apostasy of the new leadership, for in many instances, his characters express dissatisfaction with the status quo.

The relationship between Maina and Meja has always survived on pranks, banter and harmless betrayal. However, this does not seem to be the case when Maina flings a parcel at Meja which leads to the chasing of the latter. This reader does not know whether the flinging of the parcel is a ploy to enable Maina get away with the real 'take' or whether it is an act contrived to expose Meja to great risks which Maina knows his friend is incapable of facing. Meja inadvertently counter balances Maina's 'treachery' by running to the front streets in spite of the latter's warning, "..... whatever you do, keep to the backstreets" (p.45). However, his running to the front is more of a display of inexperience than a wish to betray. In anguish he felt "he had disobeyed and BETRAYED his companion" (p.45). The revelation of "the sweet rotten .... apples" (p.45) after Meja is brought down by a car is a disappointment to both Meja and the crowd that chased him. Are rotten apples worth

dying for? This bewildering spectacle is Mwangi's way of bringing the backstreet realities to the attention of the smug, unnoticing front street people. As touching as the scene is, it does not achieve the desired effect for only "a few women sniffled (before they) walked away drying their eyes" (p.44). The accident is symbolic of the perversive violence in the city as well as underscores the theme of betrayal. While the majority feed from dustbins, a few others ride in posh cars maiming and killing. Mwangi gives a more detailed treatment of this aspect of betrayal in Going Down River Road.

In spite of his organisational competence, the Razor is portrayed as an irrational and inconsistent leader who for sentimental reasons betrays the rules he has made. Against the general concensus of his gang members he brings Maina into the plot for the single reason that they were once class mates. He is not moved when Sweeper reminds him that one of his friends had betrayed the gang in the past.

More glaring is Razor's 'unconstitutional' detailing of Sweeper to 'teach' Maina on the streets. "This is against the rules (for) a new member has to prove his worth even before he is trained" (p.60). By abusing the rules he has made, Razor does not only arouse the anger of the cantankerous Sweeper, he destroys the confidence reposed in him by his gang members.

The police consistently receive admonition from Mwangi for their creepy and treacherous methods. In Taste of Death, the children despise them for their meanness and brutality. In Kill Me Quick the police are portrayed as nosy, tricky, fraudulent and inordinately ambitious, thereby betraying the confidence reposed in them. Like the Razor, they do not always discharge their duties dispassionately. "An innocent citizen" could end up in prison "by his own attempts to prove himself guiltless" (p.72). The excesses of the police should, however not be judged in isolation. The state police is one of the relics of the colonial administration that has been re-fashioned in a sophisticated manner in order to cope with the new wave of peoples' uprisings. Rather than protecting the people, the police becomes an apparatus of terrorism. Mwangi concludes that, "which ever way you looked at it, you ended up in the can, and the lovable public servant received his shiny medal and a heavier pay packet" (p.73).

Being the contact men, the police reflect the mood of the national leadership. The excesses of the police can only therefore be understood through a careful study of the mentality of the bourgeoisie which has been conditioned by the colonial contradictions. The bourgeois desperately want to be 'men' like their erstwhile masters and this idealist aspiration has the tendency of making them oppressors. According to

Paulo Freire;

> this phenomenon derives from the fact that the oppressed, at a certain moment of their existential experience, adopt an attitude of "adhesion" to the oppressor. Under these circumstances they cannot 'consider' him sufficiently clearly to objectivise him - to discover him outside themselves. 20

This implies that although the oppressed know that they are trodden on, their perception of the oppressor is blurred by their submersion in the reality of oppression. Sequel to this, their perception of themselves as the underdogs does not stimulate them into liberating themselves from this contradiction but dangerously makes them identify with that which they seek to overthrow. Instead of 'springing' a new man from the resolution of the colonial contradiction as freedom is won, a new version of the oppressor armed with sophisticated state apparatus is hatched. And he apprehends his predicament from individualistic perspective because he identifies with the oppressor. This invariably robs him of a consciousness of a person that belongsto the oppressed class. The new elites and their police imitate and sometimes surpass the colonial master because they find in him their quintessence of manhood.

Gangsterism is a precarious life style because it thrives on dare-devilry, betrayals and counter betrayals. Neja becomes a victim of these intrigues in the Razor's gang. They have broken into a white-

man's house while he was away on leave (and) practically swept the house of all its belongings" (p.123). In the process of disposing the stolen goods the police catch one of them who "told the police everything" (p.123). The emphasis is not on the efficiency of the police but the fluidity of betrayal. It is significant to note that neither Meja nor the rest of the betrayed members feel bitter about the betrayer. They are used to this kind of life style. Meja confesses that this was "to be expected of a gang member once in the hands of the police" (p.123).

While in Carcase for Hounds, nature declares its unflinching support for the forest fighters, in Kill Me Quick, the reverse is the case. Mwangi demonstrates nature's indifference to the predicament of the oppressed in several ways. He manages to draw a picture of betrayal in between sequences of drought and deluge. First, the drought kills virtually all plants and animals, driving the rural people in the process to seek aid in the city. In the city, it is "heralded .... by swarms of flies and a dry dust-carrying wind that swept down the backstreets choking everything" (p.9). Maina and Meja "became dehydrated and their bodies were covered in scales" (p.9) in the process. So for a long time "the indifferent skies poured their shares of misery into the backstreets" (p.10).

There is hardly any respite with the arrival of rains as:

> The streets were covered by puddles and the chilly winds pursued the youths into the best sheltered corners of the buildings and lanes. The food from the back of the supermarket was soggy and uneatable ..... (p.10).

With drizzle increasing "to a steady downpour which by the time it stopped would leave all the culverts and bins flooded beyond habitation" (p.11) nature has cleaarly declared its belligerent position.

However, the national leadership also assumes the role of a betrayer by its inability to mobilise and integrate its economy long after independence. Consequently, there is continuous dependence on obsolete agricultural methods which inevitably proves useless before drought. The effects are all too obvious: large-scale famine and suffering. Mwangi attributes all these to the lack of vision or ideology on the part of the national leadership. And according to Patrick Wilmot:

> Without ideology there cannot be national consciousness because national consciousness is the recognition of belonging to a specific community which pursues defined social, economic and cultural interests designed to enhance the well-being of the members of that community.21

Mwangi demonstrates in the novel that the leadership contents itself with frivolous things such as 'maintaining' law and order instead of fashioning out policies that are beneficial to the generality of the people.

Cultural identity which is the source of pride to any group of people as in many African writers' works, is betrayed. However, unlike in Sembene Ousmane's God's bits of wood where Ndeye Touti refuses bluntly to identify with her culture, Mwangi demonstrates this treachery in a subtle manner. Meja braves it into a restaurant and out of desperation is prepared to sell his labour at what ever price. When the manager asks him, "What can you cook?", and he replies, "I can cook posho and ... and porridge" (p.7), the manager's next question, "What is that?" (p.7), is a mixture of surprise and contempt. Posho and porridge, African delicacies are too inferior and insignificant to be served in a restaurant situated on an African soil and run by an African. Mwangi treats this feeling of inferiority complex in Going Down River Road, which forms the next chapter of this dissertation.

Betrayal is also brought to the attention of the reader through reminiscences of characters engaged in some relationships. Shortly before Maina takes off to the city, he promises to marry his childhood love. "We dreamed a great lot too, me and this girl" (p.35), he recalls. He continues:

> I was to write her as soon as I got a job and make her dreams come true. But all that is wasted labour now. None of these things will ever come true (p.35).

The breach of promise is not a deliberately contrived

act to hurt a childhood love; it is a dream smashed by the realities of the modern-day Nairobi.

Besides these, there are love tiffs that ultimately end in betrayal. Sara who Razor introduces as his "own heart" (p.53) "suddenly discovered that she was a woman not a gangster" (p.129). The significance of her betrayal lies in the fact that it ruins Razor and the entire gang. Through hindsight too, it is learnt that Razor was a good leader, for after his death nobody leads the gang successfully.

Of all the human relationships that are betrayed in Kill Me Quick, that of Maina and Meja is the most complex. Maina, out of accumulated frustration is caught attempting to commit suicide. While other gangsters offer words of comfort, Meja says brutally:

> Go hang yourself. That will satisfy you. Go get it done with. Only do not string yourself in our hut. Go now. Get out (p.131).

Meja considers his friend's suicide bid as betrayal. He remembers his first meeting with him in the back-streets and how he (Maina) had prevented him from:

> .... giving up living. And here he was the same man, the same teacher now desperately trying to die (p.130).

Although Meja has reasons for feeling angry and betrayed, he forgets too soon that he is the first to break the vow they made in Boi's farm by going

home. For instance, when he "remembered the pledge they had made at the farm (he) did not look at Maina" (p.121). Meja has no moral justification for feeling betrayed when Maina therefore attempts suicide. Although "Maina had been so embittered by his friend's attack on him that" (p.132) he visited home where he murdered a couple, it cannot be said that he is destroyed by Meja. Meja is only a catalyst in that process.

One of the major set backs of his earlier novels is the inability of his heroes to develop because they are adults and are already set in their ways. This is not the case with Kill Me Quick. He chooses for his heroes this time not adults who have had to shoot their way out of tight corners in bamboo forests but two strappling youths bubbling with life in the city. The heroes grow with the novel while the reader watches helplessly as they head for inevitable destruction. Mwangi brings out the sordid details with detachment, and this has placed Kill Me Quick among the fine novels of this century. Eustace Palmer, for instance has described it as a:

> miniature painting (where) everything is done on a small scale but with such delicacy, accuracy, and taste that one can only refer to the work as a minor masterpiece. 22

Other critics are not any less superlative in their descriptions of the novel.

Finally, in Kill Me Quick, Mwangi faces the problem of chronicling the post-independence apostasy, interpreting and explaining the factors responsible for it. He explains that the war against colonialism does not entirely reflect a wish to rid the African continent of colonialism. Clearly, more energies were dissipated towards ending colonial injustice such as forced labour, inequality in social and economic scales. The effect of all these is the germination of neo-liberal universalism which is compounded by intellectual laziness, cowardice, alienation and the inability of the neo-liberals to forge alternative route to total emancipation. The external angle, which is the 'fiefish' annexation of the Kenyan economy to the 'mother' country's is not left out either. Thus, independence has been a far-cry from the expectations of the people.

Mwangi adds that for meaningful independence to be manifest, the root causes of these vices; oppression, exploitation and corruption will have to be located. He demonstrates this by the persistent discontent exhibited by Meja and Maina, Razor and other gangsters. Mwangi, however, through the adroit presentation of an intellectually poor leadership and a confused mass, does not offer the much sought after solution.

Consequently, his handling of the events invites

comparison with Ngugi's Petals of Blood. Ngugi suggests in his novels that almost every Kenyan is guilty of one form of apotasy or the other. What is required is repentance, forgiveness and re-dedication, and he illustrates this point with Gukonyo in a tribute to Mugo. Thus, the theme of reconciliation in the interest of a viable future is one of the major pre-occupations of Ngugi. While Mwangi does not reject this vision, he does not see the possibility of this happening, hence the recurrent cases of betrayal. He rejects any hope of a better future largely because he recognises the permanent replacement of communal life style with new bases of social relations. He does not see the possibility of the oppressed teaming up as in pre-independence days to fight for themselves.

Kill Me Quick is a befitting prelude to Going Down River Road, another novel that dramatises the cyclical nature of betrayal in post-independence Kenya.

NOTES

1. Meja Mwangi, Kill Me Quick, London: Heinemann, 1973, p.1. Subsequent page references are in the text.

2. Lee Nichols, Conversations with African Writers, Washington DC, Voice of America, 1981, p.197.

3. Ibid, p.197.

4. E.A. Brett, Colonialism and Underdevelopment in East Africa: The Politics of Economic Change 1919 - 39, London: Heinemann, 1973, p.22.

5. Eustace Palmer, The Growth of the African Novel, London: Heinemann, 1983, p.308.

6. OCLAE: Magazine of the Latin American Continental Students Organization: English Edition, Number 2/84, CU.ISSN 0029 - 6961, Navana Cuba, p.20.

7. Ngugi Wa Thiongo, Writers in Politics, London: Heinemann, 1981, p.3.

8. Ibid, p.3.

9. Dr. R.P.A. Ilechukwu, "A New Look at the New Educational Policy" Being an Article published in the Sunday New Nigerian, Oct. 20, 1985, p.14.

10. Kwame Nkrumah, A Hand book of Revolutionary Warfare, London: Panaf Books Ltd., Reprinted 1974, p.20.

11. Ngugi Wa Thiongo, op.cit., p.24.

12. Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963, p.120.

13. Eustace Palmer, op.cit., p.309.

14. Eldred Jones ed., African Literature Today Number 13, London: Heinemann and Africana Publishing Company, 1983 p.152.

15. Eustace Palmer, op.cit., p.309-10.

NOTES CONT'D.

16. Norma Perchonock, "The Root of Urban Crisis in Nigeria: 1885-1985". Being text of the paper presented to Seminar on Nigerian Economy and Society since the Berlin Conference, A.B.U., Zaria, 11-15 November, 1985. Published in the Sunday New Nigerian, November 24, 1985, p.7.

17. Neil McEwan, Africa and the Novel, London: MacMillan, 1983, p.122.

18. Frantz Fanon, op.cit., p.122.

19. Eldred Jones ed., op.cit., p.153.

20. Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, New York: The Continum Publishing Corporation, 1982, p.30.

21. Patrick Wilmot, Ideology and National Consciousness, Ibadan: Lautern Books, 1980, p.3.

22. Eustace Palmer, op.cit., p.310.

Chapter Five

GOING DOWN RIVER ROAD

Going Down River Road, Mwangi's best novel to date also examines post-independence betrayals, but unlike Kill Me Quick, it has a large cast of characters who are adults and are workers even though their conditions are hardly better than Meja's and Maina's. The narrative technique is also more nature.

Set in the crowded part of Nairobi, the story examines the life style of labourers at a construction site, in brothels and in their shacks. Mwangi portrays them as victims of employers of labour, landlords and the officials of the Health Ministry. Thus, abject poverty is a common feature of these people. Against the objectionable living standard of these labourers, Mwangi presents another category of Kenyans, the jet-set who maim and maul the pedestrians with their automobiles.

Mwangi also exposes the activities of Patel and Chakur, a multi-national company responsible for 'developing' the tourist industry. Mwangi's presentation of the activities of the multi-nationals reveals how the government has misplaced its priorities by pursuing gigantic projects that have no relevance to the peoples' needs. He enunciates that this is responsible for the poverty and violence in the

society. Elizabeth Knight appropriately observes that 'Meja Mwangi neatly contrasts the facade of development with the reality of stagnation, and even retrogression in the living standards of the majority of the people".[1] Eustace Palmer adds that:

> The building fittingly suggests that while 'development' goes on in one form, squalor and poverty still co-exist with it. It symbolises the indifference of the authorities to the sufferings of the masses, which the corruption of politicians and the police, the inequalities of the system and the high cost of living help to accentuate. 2

This apparently makes McEwan to conclude that "Going Down River Road could only be read as a novel of poverty".[3]

Mwangi weaves the story around Ben, a First Lieutenant in the army who is dismissed for colluding with some hoodlums to blow up a bank. Ben cuts the image of a rolling stone, for after his dismissal, he fails to become anything in life. Ben is not a fighter; he is content to accept his fate even when he possess enough potentials to improve his lot. For example, although he cuts the image of a tough guy he lets 'Max and his boys' do what ever they like. He does not react until Baby is nearly defiled. And when he reacts, it is not because he wants to protect the child, but because of the insult he receives from one of the gangsters who tells him, "he is not your son". His lack of will is displayed again when

Onesmus repeatedly attempts to murder him. Ben does not do more than put up a half-hearted fight, after which he is drained of all violence. Instead of working hard and 'making his bones' like the rest, he chooses to be Yussuf's errand boy, in return for less dirty jobs; but he discovers too soon that "the Yussuf errands keep getting heavier day by day; more tedious than regular dirt jobs - on the site".[4] Thus, the story of Ben is an allegory of Kenya; after the momentary glamour of independence, the country continues to drift.

Critics are unanimous about the impotency of Ben, and by extension the impotency of the national leadership, and needless to say that this is betrayal. According to McEwan, he is "slow-witted ..... aggressive and spineless".[5] Knight writes that:

> Ben is typical of the modern isolated figures of the African fiction ..... He is an anti-hero. His background is unknown, he appears to have no family ties, he is an outsider at work ..... He is politically uncommitted - he wonders who the 'they' are that Machore and the workers parliament are always referring. 6

Eustace Palmer, for instance adds that Ben:

> Survives in the mind of the reader as an anti-hero whose huge bulk and physical strength go oddly with his lack of resolution and real guts. Ben can pulverise the gangster Max and Knock the terrible giant Onesmus senseless into the mud, but there is no doubt of a certain weakness at the core 7

Consequently, Palmer concludes that "Ben's story is one of progressive deterioration".[8] The reader, from the various episodes in which Ben is involved cannot help but agree with this conclusion.

Two major incidents of treachery are brought to the attention of the reader through flashback. Ben is invited by Mr Wilkings, the Panafrican Insurance Company Manager who tosses two letters to him, one a military discharge letter, the other the insurance company appointment letter with the following words: "we have been instructed by ... certain persons to take action ..... They want results" (p.12). Thus, he is summarily dismissed from his prestigious job. He thinks "it must have been some one from the bloody Sixth Army who betrayed him. May be the C.O. bastard" (p.12). The feeling of self-defeat does not allow Ben to fight for his existence. This, coupled with the ease with which he gets mixed up with some cheap hoodlums apparently make Neil McEwan to conclude that he "is more a victim of his own folly than that of 'society'".[9] While the objective reader hardly has grounds for quarreling with this conclusion, McEwan does not take into cognisance the existing realities in Ben's society. As a plaintive character, his 'shameful' action in the army epitomises the general decadence in the society. According to him:

> Everybody was scrambling for big money, and no one cared how you made it. You

> could have sold the whole goddamn country to eager buyers; a lot of those guys in the big cars on the avenue did just that (p.54).

Ben's action therefore does not run against the current; thus he is not any bigger victim than the society itself. He seems to be aware of this because, in spite of his frustrations at the insurance company, he has no regrets.

On the allegorical plane, it suggests the tremendous influence the external forces wield on the economy of the newly independent states; it is a vicious debt crisis. In spite of all these, the point must still be made that instead of re-investing for national benefit, the elites turn around to gobble down the wealth, and this negates the objectives of independence. It is significant that Ben settles for a menial job without a fight. The new leadership does just that, it is content with crumbs from the master's table since it is mentally too poor to offer new ideas.

The rise of neo-colonialism made possible by the African leadership marginalises a large chunk of Kenya's work force who are condemned to oppression and exploitation instead of redemption. In Mwangi's words:

> .... they resumed their march, the endless routine trudge, the tramp of the damned at the Persian wheel (p.6).

On the road they are at the mercy of the "ever haughty inconsiderate car owners (who never) stop trampling on them" (p.39). For instance, "a car screeches on the avenue narrowly missing a student from the Kenya Polytechnic" (p.38). Consequently, cars are the scourge of the pedestrians. An authorial quotation is inevitable once again:

> The two buddies join the large crowd assembled at the Zebra crossing waiting to cross. Cars sweep by at rally speeds oblivious to the nervously waiting mass of humanity. Drivers never give way ..... A reckless foot-slogger desperately dashes across. Tyres shriek. Drivers curse the idiotic pedestrians. The rest of the barefoot squad drag themselves across the rubber smelling road .... (p.39).

The impression created by this passage is that of hunters stalking game; the privileged are only too happy to use their prized cars as instruments of destruction instead of pleasure and relief, and this is betrayal. The tendency to drive fast at the expense of other road users suggests the rat race which is a common feature of the capitalist economy. Mwangi's response which is conveyed through the reactions of the pedestrians is that of anger:

> 'You think you are gods in your cars?'
> 'Fuck off the goddam road!'
> 'Fuck your stolen car!'
> 'Bloody Indian!'
> 'This is not your fuck house. Or your goddam office ..... (p.39).

Mwangi insinuates that the car owners are crooks who

after exploiting the people have now decided to maim and maul them without compuction. In spite of the workers vitriol however, they do nothing more than wishing that some day they too "will get" (p.39) cars.

At home, the City Council razes their houses to dust in the name of maintaining cleanliness. Ocholla complains that "they burned (his) shack down this morning" (p.65) without providing an alternative accommodation. The way the City Council goes about ridding the town of dirt is also analogous to hunters stalking game. The Council officials surprise their victims in the early hours of the morning when they are still in bed. They are hardened monsters like their car-owner counterparts, therefore not even Ben's passionate pleadings can stop them from burning the hut:

> 'Well .... we eh, there is Baby still
> asleep. He is a little boy .... a kid.
> You cannot just wake him up just .....
> just to burn down a little hut. He
> is small you know. An orphan .... yes,
> an orphan, motherless and .....

The destruction of the people's residential quarters without the provision of alternatives reveals the helplessness and betraying tactics of the leadership. Certainly the people who fought for independence deserve a better deal.

According to Mwangi, the continuous springing up of the huts after their demolition does not only suggest

"the residents perseverance, and capacity for good humour",[10] It implies that the leadership has not yet found a permanent solution to the problem. The authorial comment sums it up:

> There is something malignant about shanty huts. They go up in smoke at dawn, spring to life again by twilight. One just cannot keep them down. The Council knows this. Char them as many times as you like and they mushroom back just as many times.

It is therefore not only the act of burning down houses of helpless people that constitutes betrayal, the inability of the leadership to profer solutions is also treacherous.

Made powerless by their lean purses, the workers are constrained to feed at 'health hazard,' cafetarias like Sukuma Wiki, Grubland and Hilotoni where they struggle with flies for food. For instance, "Ben flushes out a giant green fly off the edge of his mug" (p.3) as he eats along. The workers are conscious of the great risks they run by feeding in such seedy places, but they console themselves with a fatalistic 'belief' that "germs don't kill Africans" (p.38). They reason that:

> If germs did kill Africans, Development House would never have got off the ground. What with all those green latrine flies swimming in the pot, shitting in the porridge and dying all over, even drowning in the tea (p.38).

Mwangi's intention here is to demonstrate how abysmally low the peoples' standard of living has degenerated after independence. In many respects, this is a profound betrayal of those who had faith in self-rule. Tom Mboya observes that:

> perhaps the greatest problem facing Africa today is the economic one. We face a situation in which millions are undernourished, uneducated, living narrow lives in poor conditions... what makes it all the more critical is that these same people, our citizens, had high hopes that independence will change everything. 11

The disappointment of the people who toiled for independence but are now compelled to live like swines is best conveyed in Nyerere's words:

> .... there were very high expectations about the consequences of Uhuru. While our peoples did not expect Utopia over night, they did expect from independence a new state of human dignity and freedom, and rapid improvements in their economic condition. 12

Thus, instead of revelling in the midst of plenty as promised by the new elites, the people wallow in abject poverty. Their predicament is made worse by cruel and corrupt government officials who maim them on the highways and destroy their homes repeatedly. In spite of their deplorable conditions, the characters do not go beyond discussing those whose betrayal has led them to their predicament. They appear confused, frightened and incapable of rising against the oppressors.

Mwangi uses the example of the "assistant Minister" to dramatise the cyclical nature of betrayal. By Machor's account, he was "a whites collaborator during the fight for freedom" (p.54) yet the new leadership entrusts to him a powerful public office. This is one of the most frequently indicted incidences of betrayal in the African novel. In A Grain of Wheat, the tragedy is conveyed in Githua's cry: "the government has forgotten us. We who fought for freedom".[13] The government has instead bestowed its blessings on those "who ran to the shelter of schools and universities" and they are "riding in long cars and changing them daily as if motor cars were clothes".[14]

The "Assistant Minister" is also the MP in charge of Bondei Constituency, "but he never gets up to say anything for the poor bastards ..... because he is always drunk and fast asleep" (p.54) in the house. The story of the Assistant Minister is a vindication of the saying that "to those who have, more will be given". He duplicates as Minister and MP at the same time while majority of the people have no jobs.

The "labourers' parliament" (p.90) through which some of these stunning revelations come to light is an innocuous assembly desperately desiring change but is incapable of effecting any. While the technique of commenting through labourers cuts out authorial intrusion considerably, it reduces the conflict to

mere diatribe. Moreover, the presence of the petit bourgeoisie is not felt, except their immorality which is learnt through gossip.

The mutilation of national psyche through media violence or saturated advertising is an area that cannot be ignored because it is done with the connivance of the black leadership. The Newafric Skin Lightning Creams' advertising slogan: "Join the New Africans" is intended to repudiate the self, that is black identity. Consequently, the new elites cultivate eating and talking habits that are entirely alien to their people and environment. This is betrayal of national consciousness because according to Ngugi, "most national liberation movements start by rejecting the culture of the colonizer, by repudiating the religion of the oppressing nation..."[15] The elites are deemed therefore to have sold their conscience and culture to an alien one. Mwangi however believes they are victims of their own designs, for they are not accepted by the imperial masters whom they ape; neither do they fit into the traditional set-up which they despise and have lost contact with. The significance of the slogan itself is not lost on the reader. It has a touch of irony; 'the new Africans', predominantly elites are smart crooks who have taken shelter in posh limousines and mansions. If any one therefore joins them, they will not torture their broken hair and scrawny skin like Ocholla.

Mwangi fuses nemesis with violence to bring out the pervasive effect of betrayal. Ben for instance is chased from one place to another by his erstwhile colleagues in the army for the role he played in the abortive bank raid. If it is not the "C.O. bastard" asking his employers to fire him, it is a 'mad' Sergeant who has not taken his dismissal from the army lightly. The "dimly-witted" Onesmus is yet to be convinced that Ben did not deliberately betray them, so he warns him; "I haven't forgotten, Lieutenant, I will get you" (p.33). Onesmus' quest for vengeance is not so much a manifestation of the pervasive violence in the society as it is a response to a socio-economic system that fails to provide jobs for its citizens once they have lost the first ones. The story of Ben and Onesmus is that of social depreciation but the latter fails to recognise the former as a comrade in adversity. Their fight which is analogous to that of Boi and "the boys" in Kill Me Quick is therefore an expression of bottled frustrations. Neil McEwan is not correct when he writes that "fighting in the dirt seems futile beyond comment".[16] Palmer's claim that "violence can degenerate into motiveless hatred and, as is the case of the maniac Onesumus, even into murder"[17] is also not acceptable to the reader. While the reader acknowledges the general violence in the society, it is not 'motiveless', not even in the case of 'mad Onesmus'. More than anything else, it is one of the

consequences of inequality, cheating, and betrayal. Even 'easy-going' men like Ocholla have killer instincts in them. When he kills Onesmus, for instance, he is not merely protecting a good friend, he is making salient what has been latent in him. His disenchantment with the entire system including his employers is made obvious by the messages he wants to send Yussuf. He asks Ben if "MISGUIDED UNSCRUPULOUS BLOOD SUCKER (and) MISAPPROPRIATOR OF PUBLIC FUNDS" (p.166) would do.

Of great importance too is Yussuf's response to the death of Onesmus. No sooner has the crane bucket smashed him than Yussuf starts wailing; "the truck is brand new. I don't know what my uncle will say" (p.148). Clearly, he has no feelings for the poor man who has been killed doing their job. Ben who ought to have been happy at the death of Onesmus ".... turns round and disgustedly stalks away" (p.150) on hearing Yussuf's remarks, which to say the least are betraying. Yussuf's behaviour is representative of an entire capitalist economy which regards workers as tools and not human beings. Accordingly, they are only useful when they have the capacity to service the system. Mwangi puts this more succinctly thus:

> On a construction job, the presence of a labourer is akin to that of the diesel mixer. His life is like that of the battered old tipper. When they are no longer virile, no more useful, they are towed away and replaced with another that works.

> Construction goes on just as before, for the Contractor has an obligation, a job to complete for his client. When scum like Onesmus die, they are quite quickly forgotten (p.154).

The reader inevitably concludes that Patel and Chakur can afford to make life mean, short and brutish for its workers because the national leadership whose responsibility it is to protect its citizens abnegates that duty.

In a capitalist economy, a good number of the marginalised survive by engaging in petty business such as selling food in shacks. Accordingly, shacks like Tree Bottoms, Sukuma Wiki, Food Kiosks and Hilotoni Hotel are therefore essential means of livelihood to their owners and customers alike. For instance, although the workers do not:

> believe in coppers. They do not believe in anybody, anything - not even Yussuf, not death. They understand hunger, exhaustion, the building. They understood Hilotoni and are mad that he is no more. He was the only one with whom they could indulge in truly authentic communication (p.154).

This is why the destruction of these shacks by the City Council should be seen as a tool of the state considered as betrayal. However, the City Council and the international capital which employ laissez-faire doctrines which bring out tough competition and eventual elimination of the small business. In the end, the nation does not have any thing to point to as its own since indigenous business has been nipped in

the bud. This observation from a n influential journal captures the mood appropriately:

> Twenty-four years after independence, Kenya's basic resources remain in the hands of private companies, many of them subsidiaries of transnational corporations like Lonrho, Unilever, General Motors and Imperial Chemical Industries. Britain dominated the country's economy until 1969 when the USA emerged to account for 1/3 of all foreign investment in Kenya. As a result, there has been a rapid increase in U.S. influence in all areas of Kenyan life, an influence which the government encourages despite criticism: ..... the question of who contributes to Kenya's economy will continue to be a major talking point and could lead to increased tensions. Given the lack of fora for public debate and the government's sensitivity to any criticism, one may expect the situation in Kenya to worsen 18

The mortgaging of the country's future by the leadership is yet another far-reaching betrayal. However, it is not only the small indigenous business that gets destroyed; its owners are ruined too. Needless to say that they are put out of business, and consequently, their lives and those of their dependants are jeopardised. For instance, the reader watches helplessly as Mr. Hilotoni is reduced from the status of a respectable man to that of a dog. According to the authorial comment.

> The hands still called him Mr Hilotoni even though he no longer had the hotel But they could not understand him much. They had no money and they were hungry. The old man then cried for a job from Yussuf. But Yussuf informed him that he was only a foreman; there was the building manager, the chashier, the worthless Banianis Kanji Bhai, Ben, Ocholla - why pick on him.

> Mr. Hilotoni crumbled into dust, blew away and was never heard of again (p.154).

Definitely, the people of Kenya did not fight for independence so that they could be so shabbily treated. In many instances than one, it is a betrayal of the people and national aspirations.

If the destruction of local hotels (shacks) and their proprietors is betrayal of trust, so are the reasons adduced for this act. It is an irony that the shacks are not destroyed to pave way for more decent ones or a hospital but "SUNSHINE HOTELS LTD, 800 BED TOURIST CLASS" (p.193). In Ben's opinion, "one would think there were already enough tourist hotels in town" (p.195). Elizabeth Knight remarks that "it is as though the first priority in the country's development is the foreigner - the tourist".[19] This exactly is what the national leadership has done: it serves the interest of the foreigner at the expense of its citizens. Mwangi's response to this betraying act is disillusionment because the entire undertaking makes a mockery of independence. Apparently, speaking through Ben, he says that "what is really wanted is an establishment big enough to look after the simple needs of a construction labourer" (p.195).

It is significant that all the companies handling the Sunshine Hotels project are foreign. For instance, the architects are "J.S. Hamilton, P.P. Bhut"

the contractors are "Patel and Chakur Contractors", the electricians are "P.O. Patel" while the decorators are "S.N. Patel" (p.193). Mwangi does not only use this instance to demonstrate the cancerous and cyclic presence of foreign monopolies in Kenya's economy, he reveals that many years after independence, his country is yet to produce an indigenous company that is capable of handling a gigantic project. This too is betrayal.

It is obvious that the change in the political leadership has not registered any changes in the construction industry. Thus, a monopoly like Patel and Chakur has no senior African representative. Apart from the corporate profits carted away, renumerations of labourers are not determined by their ouputs but by the colour of their skin. So, while Indians earn fat salaries including "house allowance, insurance, and inconvenience allowance" (p.30), the black labourers are not only grossly underpaid, they do not enjoy any of those benefits. This socio-economic injustice has not only weakened the African, it has adversely affected his psyche, so much so that Ocholla says that, "sometimes it doesn't pay to be black" (p.30). Had the African leadership modified the social relations of production, the inequality would not have arisen, but it has teamed up with foreign capital to betray its people. Haniel Ukpaukure appropriately observes that:

> Two characteristics of Third World Countries are extraverted economies and the willingness of the rulers to work in partnership with foreign concerns for the exploitation of their countries. 20

Thus, the Africanization policy in the construction industry is superficial and cosmetic. Ben and Ocholla are promoted foreman and crane driver grade four respectively but their salaries are not commensurate with their positions. The new appointments only succeed in creating fresh problems. While Ocholla ponders how best to utilise his meagre salary, Ben is caught brooding how he will pay Baby's school fees and still remain alive. Thus, the demand of the bourgeoisie for a ruling class entirely made up of the ruling class does not reflect an authentic process of nationalization but a selfish mode of transfering the advantages hitherto enjoyed by the foreign hands into native bourgeoisie.

In the final analysis, Going Down River Road is a consistent elaboration of betrayal of the people by the national leadership although the latter conveys the impression that it is determined to tackle the problems of unemployment, health, housing and general backwardness. The reader notices that while the aspirations set on paper are ideal, the leadership is often caught implementing policies that are inimical to the over all growth of the country. In the end, the reader meets superimposed growth and people with:

> haunted, hungry, poverty-hypnotised faces, hateful faces and the fragrant stink of unwashed bodies and burst sewers (p.57).

Besides his pre-occupation with the betrayals of the leadership and the multi-nationals, Mwangi examines human relationships which more often than not end in betrayal. One of such is Wini's affair with Ben. Wini is introduced as "... everything he wanted ..... she paid the rent, bought food and did not mind much if he drank all his pay" (p.12). In spite of her apparent devotion to Ben, she absconds when the former least expects it. Her 'escape' coincides with the time Ben contemplates marrying her which makes the experience unbearable for him.

Eustace Palmer thinks that "the portrayal of Wini is probably one of the few lapses in this book".[21] For according to him although Mwangi presents "a very good impression of Wini's body", he only succeeds in presenting "a very hazy one of her personality".[22] He explains that:

> Mwangi does not really succeed in convincing us that Wini, who has seemed to be such a devoted mother, who has idiolized her baby and seemed to live only for him, can suddenly become so callous as to abandon him nonchalantly with the directive to Ben that he is to be sent to a charity home. 23

Consequently, he concludes that "Mwangi is incapable

of creating realistic and convincing women"[24] after drawing the reader's attention to Sarah's 'rude' behaviour in Kill Me Quick. Palmer's conclusions illustrate his ignorance of the society Mwangi portrays because it is obvious that like many Kenyans, Wini wants to survive. She wants to get rich quick and her white boss offers better prospects than Ben. So also is Sarah who Wini invites comparison with although the latter maintains a more mature carriage. The abruptness with which these ladies jilt their men is therefore not suggestive of Mwangi's clumsiness at creating realistic female characters. It is also not so much an exhibition of ficklessness as it is an indication of the paramount need to survive. In addition, Palmer's prescription which is quoted below suggests that he has to read the book all over again:

> we would really have like to see some of the motives of Wini's conduct - such as the decision to abandon Ben and Baby 25. -

In the first instance, it is Ben who packs to meet Wini, and he is not unaware that she has been meeting Johnny. When Ben objected to her being picked "up every morning" (p.5) by Johnny:

> Wini lost her temper, told him Johnny was not as strange as he thought and stopped just short of reminding Ben in whose house he was living. The implication was plain. Ben was an honoured guest; a privileged refugee (p.5).

Thus, it is clear that Wini has been in control all along, and Ben merely living on borrowed time. What more motive does Palmer expect of Mwangi?

Mwangi's male characters react very pathetically to desertions. For instance, in Kill Me Quick, Razor drinks himself to death while Ben cries out in anguish. According to the authorial comment:

> Feverish tremors shake his body .....
> Tears stream down his cheeks into his thick rough beard. He covers his face with his calloused hands, lowers his body and mind chilled to stillness....
> He has been BETRAYED and cheated.....
> (pp.113 - 4).

According to Ben, the 'stealing' of Wini by the white manager is a part of a long historical process. He fumes:

> white beggars! They cannot find anything good in their own country so they come to rob us. Nothing good in their own bloody kind so they plunder ours (p.115)

Ben accordingly does not perceive the humiliating experience on a personal level. He is therefore prepared to enlist the services of black friends and foes to deal with Johnny. On the surface, Ben's call sounds ludicrous and childish; however, this could be Mwangi's way of calling for unity among black people, be they friends or enemies. Without such unity they cannot face an external foe like Johnny who is representative of the exploiting white people.

The occasion also affords Ben the opportunity of criticising the new leadership which has failed its people. The new elites having internalised and mastered the ways of the oppressor are hesitant about freedom, for it requires them to be responsible and autonomous. Freedom is a reality in the psyche of man that must be pursued vigorously, but the new elites settle down to sharing the gains of independence instead of pursuing freedom. So, according to Ben, many years after independence, the whites still "take our jobs, screw our girls, and take them away" (p.115).

Through flashback the reader learns that at fourteen, Wini gave birth to a child for a "boy friend (who) who was not even interested" (p.24). She felt betrayed that the boy "just ran off and never came back to see the fruit of his beautiful labour" (p.24). Consequently, she thinks all men "are brutes" (p.24) and should be treated shabbily. This thread of thought reinforced by the will to survive, no doubt is responsible for her running away with Johnny.

There are more betraysls as the story re-surfaces from the flash back. Ocholla's wives who bear children like guinea pigs, do so without his carnal knowledge and acquiscience. He confides in Ben, "I can't remember when last I slept with any of my wives" (p.91). In many societies, adultery is considered to be a serious offence, this is why the agony Ocholla

feels is legitimate. In the words of Ben:

> If there is anything worse than knowing that your wife is expecting a baby, it is the not knowing whose hundredth baby she is in for (92).

While the reader sympathises with Ocholla for feeling betrayed, the attitude of his wives could be accepted, for in the final analysis they are responding to the vacuum created by their husband and the harsh economic environment. They too want to survive. That Ocholla consistently dodges his marital and paternal responsibilities is no secret. He tells Ben:

> All women are bastards. Children are sick, school fees are up, and they want new dresses! Wives are animals, Ben ..... they are not getting a thing from me any more. Where do they think I am digging the Money. Bitches (p.62).

In a symbolic manner, his 'irresponsibility' is as a result of an unkind life style that labourers are subjected to. They hardly earn enough to keep body and soul together, let alone cater for an army of wives and children.

Just as Ocholla's wives betray him so does the little child in New Eden betray its mother. The Child who is a confined in a "carton marked (CORNED BEEF"(p.128) screams to the discomfiture of the mother, a sixteen year old prostitute who does not want Ben to

know that she has a baby:

> The baby was not supposed to have squeaked at such a critical moment. It was not in the script. Susan holds her breath and watches Ben (p.129).

These cases of betrayal are intended to illustrate moral depravity in the society. Both Wini and the Minister's daughter gave birth to 'bastards' at fourteen while Susan did so at sixteen. Mwangi however, does not moralise. It is left to the reader to draw these conclusions. Neil McEwan shares this view when he writes that "the novel cannot be read as a moral work".[26] Mwangi's intention therefore is to portray a society that is governed by the morally bankrupt, mentally poor, and industrially backward.

The young 'accountant' at the Hilotoni cheats on his father by writing out bills a few cents less than what they should be. This is betrayal of trust but Ben sees it as a good "beginning for one following his crooked father's footsteps in business" (p.37). By giving fraud a genetic dimension, Ben implies that the economic problems of Kenya are rooted in their blood and history. This is a frightening dilemma because this ugly development will be passed to posterity; a vicious circle without solution in sight.

Betrayal is endemic at the construction sight and in the society as a whole. This explains why Onesmus the insane tipper driver and bhang 'contractor'

mixes raw grass with the weed until Yussuf the buyer notices the difference. Consequently, Ben does not consider Onesmus' act a criminal offence in spite of Yussuf's fuss because contractors are "the worst cheats" (p.83). Onesmus' attempt to fight betrayal with betrayal suggests that he understands the dialectics of this society. Mwangi's response is the same: if drug addicts like Yussuf who front for their family businesses can be brought on their knees, the better. The reader too does not sympathise with Yussuf as he whines and squirms:

> 'He (Onesmus) wants me to pay more .....
> And this grass is not half as good as it
> used to be. He is cheating me .....
> cheating me all the time (p.83).

It is significant that Ben adulterates Yussuf's drugs, the very offence for which Onesmus is fired. According to the authorial comment:

> First he breaks open the grass package
> and repacks it for Yussuf's consumption.
> He also changes the chemical composition
> of the Changaa, sort of steps it down
> for the foreman (p.142).

Ben does not think he has betrayed a man who reposes 'confidence' in him, because his action is part of a whole process starting from the distiller "who swears that on his mother's arse that he has not blended it with God's grass" (p.142). Moreover, he has fortified his conscience with the rhetorical question; "who does not cheat" (p.83). Mwangi does not frown at this

chain of betraysls and counter betrayals: he sees the whole thing as a reality his society has to contend with.

The young 'accountant' at Hilotoni is by no means the only one that betrays his professional ethics. At "FISH and CHIP", the counter "boy quickly pockets the shilling"(p.102) that Ben gives to him instead of forwarding it to his boss. This germinal display of corruption and its acceptance by Ben corroborates the contention that the society is thoroughly sick.

Although fraught with other possibilities, the actions of the tenants who refuse to vote for their 'landgod' after drinking his "six crates of bear" (p.134) on the mutual understanding that they would cast their votes for him is betrayal of trust. On the other hand it is indicative of their social awareness, for over the years, politicians' promises have come to nought as such they would no longer be taken for a ride. The tenants who are representative of the down-trodden have lost faith in the system so "they do not believe in any body, anything ..... not death" (p.154).

Of greater significance is the materialistic manner politicians canvass for votes. Mwangi indicts this ostentatious display of wealth as well as infers that leaders get unnecessarily greedy when elected because they spend so much in the electioneering processes. The reaction of the 'landgod', a symbol

of the emergent bourgeoisie is callous, creepy, and it also exposes the pettiness of the class. The eviction of his tenants makes a mockery of his "long speech on 'love your neighbour's vote'" (p.134). The evicted Bank Clerk symbolises the low income workers who are exposed to the vagaries of 'landgodism' and the city. Ben faces the same humiliation, but he manages to slink away before the landgod arrives with his bouncers and enforcers. The reader concludes that although the oppressed workers are many, they lack the necessary cohesion and understanding to oppose their exploiters and oppressors. This clearly is a deviation from the collectivist position in Mwangi's colonial novels.

One of the closest human relationships in the novel is that of Ben and Ocholla and like many others, it is betrayed. Ocholla describes it as "BETRAYAL of companionship" (p.163). Unceremoniously evicted, Ben packs to meet Ocholla in his shack at the other end of the town unannounced. According to Ocholla's psychology, although Ben is his long standing friend, he has no right to intrude on him, the fact that he is evicted notwithstanding. He considers Ben's intrusion as "bud exploitation" in the light of the reality that his shanty hut is his "absolute possession, the retreat of the vanguished heart" (p.163), and moreover, he is being forced to smile at the uninvited visitors, to invite them "to his last morsel, the bit he will not share with his wives and childrem" (p.163).

Ocholla's guarded anger does not imply that he hates Ben, but a reflection of the will to survive.

The same spirit manifests itself when Kumau leads the members of Ocholla's family to him. Kamau does not know that his action would arouse hostility from Ocholla who all along has been running away from his family. In many respects, Ocholla feels betrayed and when Kamau "realizes what he has just done, slinks away to his shack, very guilty" (p.184). He too understands. No matter what Ocholla's feelings are, Kamau cannot be regarded as a traitor.

The Police retain their sly, mean, and cunning portrait, and in the process, only those who have money get protected. They wage war on innocent citizens like Ben by locking them up and picking their pockets, thus betraying their traditional role as custodians of law and order. For example, for walking the streets 'late' at night, the police lock Ben up, "... stripping him of his money and watch neither of which he ever saw again" (p.131). The police are also shown to be carrying out mopping-up operations in their bid to eradicate crime but Mwangi thinks these clean-ups are superficial and futile because they "never touch the really greasy spots ...." (p.141). This is the major pre-occupation of Mwangi in the novel: nobody does the right thing or cares to do so.

Though not entirely new, the manner Mwangi

manipulates language in the novel is unique. He creates characters not only through attitudes and actions but through speech registers. With the exception of the Pan African Insurance Company Manager, other characters use four-letter words such as 'fuck you, ... mother of a pregnant punjab monkey .... I told the bastard ..... the fucker is dead.....'. Although attractive, and rib-cracking, this 'earthy' language more or less reveals that these characters are not elites or politicians, but labourers who are permanently committed to grit and sand by the more privileged. Thus, the language betrays them. Eustace Palmer remarks that that the "tough earthiness ..... admirably matches the status, occupations and circumstances of Mwangi's characters"[27] but wonders why Mwangi should "lapse into it himself". Neil McEwan too comments that, "Mwangi's rendering of the dialogue, which mixes British and American slang and bawdy, is exactly right: as inanely coarse as the character's circumstances".[28] It amounts to stating the obvious to say that Mwangi fashions out realistic characters.

Mwangi also captures with incredible accuracy, the speech registers of foreigners, especially the Asians. More often than not, the Indians, Bananians and Pakistanis are caught lisping: they are either exchanging letter 'V' for 'W' or 'P' for 'F'. For example Kanji Bhai says:

> "Pourty years I vork like mason....
> Pourty years I vork, Mombasa,
> Kampala, Kisumu, whole East
> Africa. First-class mason,
> first class carpenter. Pourty
> years. Then I come meet Yussup! (p.29)
> ..... I vork, I vork, follow not?
> I get twenty perer month. Follow or
> not?" (p.193).

The reader notices that the Asians are not at home with the English Language. However, their 'linguistic betrayal' may not necessarily have to do with poor education as is the case with the black labourers; it is purely biological.

As in Kill Me Quick, nature is hostile and indifferent to the plight of the peasants thus betraying their aspirations. Drought has left the people derelict, having drastically reduced their productivity, destroyed their livestock and totally made the soil unfit for tillage. This inevitably leads to migration of the rural people to the city as is the case with Ocholla's family. Their tragedy is conveyed to the reader by the senior wife:

> 'The cattle are all dead ..... There
> are no chickens any more. We ate them all
> up. During the drought. There is nothing
> to look after .....' (p.184).

By allowing the situation to get out of control, the national leadership cuts the image of a betrayer. Usually the immediate reaction to any serious drought is the mobilisation of relief materials for the afflicted. In the novel, nothing of this nature happens,

not even when "the drought" is accompanied by "the great diarrhoea" (p.184). Drought is a natural disaster that occurs periodically and in view of the large-scale destruction to lives and property that usually accompanies it, the afflicted countries map out strategies in advance to combat it. In the novel however, it becomes clear that the leadership neither has contingency nor long-term plans for checking drought. Thus the people are left at the mercy of a cruel, indifferent nature. This in itself is one of the consequences of a leadership that has "a fragile ecosystem, weak resource base and poverty"[29] as its for most credentials. The drought however brings Ocholla and his family together once again and consequently forces him to accept taking care of them, a responsibility he has consistently run away from.

The manner Mwangi handles the drought crisis inevitably invites comparison with Ngugi's Petals of Blood. The people of Ilmorog who are confronted by a disastrous drought, unlike Ocholla's kinsmen, undertake a journey to the city to have an audience with members of parliament. The object of their journey is to request for aid. The national leadership gives this in a manner that destroys the peoples values, norms and development. Thus a new form of hardship, domination of man by man replaces the natural hazard. At the end of the day, the annexation of the peoples' total way of life to the international economy is complete.

But Ngugi reveals that while capitalism blossoms, it also nurtures the seeds of its own destruction. Ngugi differs from Mwangi in this respect because he believes that social criticism of the system is inadequate. The writer should be able to suggest alternatives to what he criticises or condemns.

Essentially, Mwangi's treatment of betrayal in Going Down River Road reveals the past as imperfect; a mixture of heroism and misdeeds. His major statement apparently is that, the uneven development inherited from the colonial period is being perfected by the new leadership. While the majority of his characters are disillusioned, a few others like Ben and Ocholla are indifferent because they have developed 're-inforced shock absorbers'. However, while Mwangi seriously indicts the leadership for its immorality and clearly demonstrates his support for the underdog, at the risk of repetition, he does not present a vision of an alternative society.

With its perfections, Going Down River Road only examines a period in the long history of national betrayal and chaos. Consequently, in The Bustrackers, although a thriller, Mwangi paints the picture of a whole nation, its leadership and people drifting with no shore in sight.

NOTES

1. Eldred Jones ed, *African Literature Today Number 13* London: Heinemann and Africana Publishing Company, 1983, p.154.

2. Eustace Palmer, *The Growth of the African Novel*, London: Heinemann, 1983, p.317.

3. Neil McEwan, *Africa and the Novel*, London: MacMillan, 1983, p.122.

4. Meja Mwangi, *Going Down River Road*, London: Heinemann, 1976, p.156.

5. Neil McEwan, op.cit. p.123.

6. Eldred Jones, op.cit. p.155.

7. Eustace Palmer, op.cit. p.316.

8. Ibid., p.319.

9. Neil McEwan, op.cit. p.123.

10. Ibid., p.122.

11. Tom Mboya, *The Challenge of Nationhood*, London: Heinemann, 1970, p.10.

12. Julius Nyerere, "We Shall Overcome". Being an address on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Lagos. Published in the *Sunday New Nigerian* on 21/12/87, p.7.

13. Ngugi Wa Thiongo, *A Grain of Wheat*, London: Heinemann, 1964, p.110.

14. Ngugi Wa Thiongo, Ibid., p.60.

15. Ngugi Wa Thiongo, *Writers in Politics*, London: Heinemann, 1981, p.3.

16. Neil McEwan, op.cit. p.123.

17. Eustace Palmer, op.cit. p.317.

18. *African Concord*, January 6, 1987, Number 123, p.16.

19. Eldred Jones, op.cit. p.155.

20. *The Punch*, Monday September 16, 1985.

21. Eustace Palmer, op.cit. p.318.

22. Ibid, p.319.

23. Ibid, p.319.

24. Ibid, p.319.

25. Ibid, p.319.

26. Neil McEwan, op.cit. p.123.

27. Eustace Palmer, op.cit. p.321.

28. Neil McEwan, op.cit. p.123.

29. Professor J.K. Egunjobi, "Drought in Africa: A Recurrent Disaster". published in the New Nigerian on 28/5/86.

Chapter Six

THE BUSHTRACKERS

Mwangi's first four novels show him as a serious writer who is concerned with the plight of the poor people. Mwangi identifies colonialism and neo-colonialism as the major problems facing his society, and he proves consistently that these problems are responsible for the numerous cases of betrayal. In Taste of Death and Carcase for Hounds, for instance, he focuses almost entirely on the vagaries of colonialism and the urgent need to liberate his people from oppression and exploitation through collective struggle. Kill Me Quick and Going Down River Road which are sequel to Taste of Death and Carcase for Hounds examine the blossoming of betrayal in the neo-colonial era. Although Mwangi does not offer an alternative vision to the apostatic life style of the African leadership in his neo-colonial novels, there is similarity in their themes and stylistic concerns with the colonial novels.

The same thing, however, cannot be said of The Bushtrackers which is unique among Mwangi's novels. The novel may be classified as 'popular literature'. It parodies Italo-American novels such as The Godfather, Frank Costello, and Stilleto. Thus, it subsumes all the characteristics of the modern Western thrillers: intriguos, powerful gangster families, smuggling, hard-drug peddling, double-

cross, assassination, with the inevitable 'crime does not pay'. But for the exhibition of qualities that may be found in the previous novels it is not the subject of serious critical scrutiny. For instance, this reader is tempted to discuss the novel by the theme of betrayal which runs through it. In addition, quite a good number of people, especially the youth have been studying thrillers.

Betrayal obtains at the levels of human relationships, leadership, business and marital relationships in the novel. It is of some significance to observe that impotence is the first to be discussed in the novel. This is by no means the first time Mwangi treats this aspect of betrayal. In Taste of Death, for instance, the euphoria that precedes Mbogo's re-union with his wife renders him incapable of making love to her. But while Mbogo's frigidity is caused by the liberation struggle, Al-Haji's impotence is traceable to criminal indulgences and the resultant anxiety; and no doubt, it is intended to illustrate his hollowness and weakness although he appears to wield tremendous influence and power. Invariably, he invites comparison with Ignatius Obebe in The Old Man and the Medal, who in spite of his impressive haulk is nothing but a 'woman'. Unlike Obebe, however, Al-Haji strikes the reader as having two personalities: Alhaji the plaintive character, and Al-Haji the allegory of the betraying African leadership that has

been thoroughly puppetised.

Like the mansions of the new African leadership, his Orange Estate has all the vignettes of power and luxury: crenellated walls, a private army, helicopter a nd jet, posh automobiles and sprawling acres of wild and domestic vegetation. He appears to make all the decisions, and people fall over themselves to respond to his whims but all these are a facade, for he is nothing more than a contact man between foreign capitalists and his people whom he exploits in order to remain in power. For instance, for failing to deliver goods promptly "Happy Joe ... and the Delorie Family Council was demanding a change at Orange Estate".[1] Typical of all puppets, he promises to "send them so much ivory it will drown them" (p.57). In his over-zealousness to satisfy his masters, he is prepared to risk the lives of his Lieutenants as well as undermine the economies of neighbouring countries such as Tanzania, Zambia and Uganda. While the "Tanzanian national parks" (p.57) offer bright prospects of the highly cherished game his immediate concern is to "smuggle out the ivory out of Uganda the same way he had done the coffee" (p.57).

The ease with which Al-Haji's authority is undermined at Orange Estate by the Delorie Family exposes the dilemma of the new African leadership. It reveals that although the leadership has power over life and death in its domain yet that power is not derived from

the domain itself, therefore it is ephemeral. Since the quality of leadership sometimes, if not all the time is a reflection of the psyche of that society, it implies that independence is a sham, for the people are still being ruled from abroad. This also reveals the leaders as impotent: they are nothing more than errand boys or lackeys of the West. Mwangi's response is that, so long as they are not Masters of themselves they cannot shape their destiny and that of their countries, and he demonstrates this repeatedly in the novel.

For instance, while undoubtedly the enormous part of the Delorie's wealth is made in Kenya, the headquarters of the syndicate is in New York. In the scheme of things, that is how it has always been; foreign capitalists ally themselves with few willing indigenous petit bourgeoisie to siphon the national wealth abroad without re-investing in the land of the natives. Frantz Fanon writes that:

> The national bourgeoisie will be quite content with the r ole of the Western bourgeoisie's agent, and it will play its part without any complexes in a most dignified manner. 2 ..... The landed bourgeoisie refuses to take the slightest risk, and remains opposed to any venture and to any hazard. It has no intention of building upon sand; it demands solid investments and quick returns. The enormous profits which it pockets, enormous if we take into account the national revenue, are never re-invested.3 .... (Thus) we go on sending out raw materials; we go on being Europe's small farmers who specialize in unfinished products. 4

Obviously, this is one of the major ways African wealth is looted, and this consequently leads to the mutation of the economy and the social relations around it.

If these are unqualified examples of betrayal of leadership, so is lip service. More often than not, in public gatherings and through the media organisations, the national leadership enjoins the followership to be loyal and patriotic to its fatherland, adding that it should eschew graft, corruption and other habits that are inimical to the growth of the country. More than anything else, the allegorical Al-Haji who sponsors the dual way smuggling racket demonstrates the hypocrisy of this leadership and its propensity to betray.

Although Al-Haji is a puppet, he is not a fool. He is not unaware that he could be removed by the Delorie Family any day; and to forestal total physical elimination or to minimise the risk of it, he lodges in various banks huge sums of money and incrimina ting documents against the Delorie Family. According to the authorial comment:

> Al Haji was nobody's fool.... There were piles of highly secret documents showing not only Al's private local deals but also his international transactions for the Delorie Family and the connections he had built up over the years. There was enough evidence in the safe to earn long prison terms for several dozen people all over the world, including several very close to Guissepe Delorie, the head of the family.... If the Mafia should decide they could do

> without him, the pile of files in the safe would be enough to buy him a new lease of life. He was a careful man (p.113).

Al Haji's precaution is redolent of the African leadership that goes to any length to protect its own interest. It is of tremendous significance that Al Haji only thinks of his future and no other person's.

Mwangi's attitude towards all these is more of contempt than indictment. While he disapproves of Al Haji's nefarious role by using his wife who functions as his conscience to betray him, he equally demonstrates that he is nothing but a cheap crook. The significance of the manner of his death can hardly escape the attention of the reader; he dies by the gun, the very instrument he uses to make life miserable for others, as a result of his insatiable greed. In several respects therefore Al Haji is a perfect mirror of the emergent African leadership: hollow, petty, cheap, greedy and unsteady.

Alhaji strikes the reader as treacherous not by his enormous size and unacceptable affluence alone; but once again for his inability to make love to his wife. Most marriages, if not all, are contrived on the mutual basis of copulation. For Al Haji to therefore abnegate this responsibility, which in many respects is fundamental to the marital institution is betrayal of trust. Most of the time, "he drifted to

sleep .... too fatigued, mentally and physically, to" (p.9) make love to her. Not even after she has literally begged him;"make love to me" (p.9). The apparent chaos and sadness this attitude introduces into the marriage inevitably sets in motion a process of betrayal by Mimi which to a very large extent is responsible for the demise of Al Haji and the destruction of the Delorie business Empire in East Africa. It is not forgotten, however that apart from sexual acrimony, other reasons might have been responsible for Mimi's actions. It is not sufficiently explained whether they fall in love with each other before getting married, but one thing is clear, "they disagreed on almost everything he did .... She disapproved of his business connections....." (p.8).

Sexual failure and incompatibility are plausible reasons to make a wife betray her husband with consistency and intensity but the perceptive reader would still want to ask: how does Mimi get her information considering her meek, docile image and the extra care her husband takes in concealing his documents? Moreover, she is supposed to be a typical African woman who kept "out of the way when he had business visitors (and) speak only when spoken to" (p.8). Until sufficient answers are provided, this part of the novel appears incredible. This notwithstanding, Mwangi makes a statement through Mimi's actions. Waging an all-night war against poachers,

although a commendable effort, is not enough. Destroying a syndicate as sleuth and broad-based as the Delorie East African Business Empire requires the co-operation of an insider or someone close to the esoteric members.

The Delorie Family which takes delight in matching words with actions, thus placing 'honour' above every other thing feels betrayed by Al Haji's inability to do the same. Although, the first consignment of ivory is delivered, it is done two months behind schedule, and the Family as a result "lost on the interest" (p.33). The second consignment is seized by rangers following a tip-off, and "Happy Joe isn't so happy any more" (p.33), although in a well articulated public relations speech, Arturo says that it is not the loss of "a big roll of bread" (p.33) invested in the deal that worries Happy Joe, but the breaking of his word to his business partners in Honkong. Arturo makes it look as if incompetence is a permanent feature of Al Haji's criminal career, for according to him, Al Haji:

> screwed up the mary jane, (he) is screwing up the ivory and the currency deals and just about everything else (he) said (he) could organise... (p.36).

Inspite of Arturo's tongue-lashing and invectives, the reader is assured that Al Haji is not malignantly incompetent because in the past he:

> had personally handled thousands of coffee for the Delorie Family, earning himself a million dollars in cash, and making Giuseppe 'Happy Joe' Delorie a very happy man indeed (pp.58 - 9).

This explains why Al Haji who "the whole Delorie Family had respected (as) a man of action" (p.59) feels betrayed as they make moves to remove him from Orange Estate. While the Delorie Family ascribes the sudden misfortunes [illegible] to Al Haji's inefficiency, the latter blames it all on his fieldmen who he thinks lack good co-ordination. What none of them fails to appreciate at this point in time is the sudden efficiency of the rangers through tip-offs. Consequently the misunderstanding between Al Haji and the Delorie Family which culminates in the presence of Ricardo in Orange Estate offers a useful insight into the workings of the under world: the out post boss is nothing but a stooge who must be destroyed the moment he outlives his usefulness. At the risk of repetition, this too is the dilemma of the African leadership.

It is obvious to the reader that Al Haji is now living on borrowed time since his stay in Orange Estate is no longer determined by new successes but past achievements. While Alhaji drives himself to his death, the reader cannot help but notice the fascinating language of the underworld men which is couched in euphemism, litotes and argot, and it betrays nothing except their individual ambitions. For example the

first conversation in the novel is coded:

> 'This is Rio,' said the voice .....
> 'I know', Al said impatiently ... 'How's Mary?'
> Rio said, 'Your sister arrived this afternoon'
> 'In good health?'
> 'In very good health',

They also rely on argot even when they are passing very important information to each other. Arturo for instance tells Al Haji that 'Happy Joe isn't ~~so~~ happy any more' (p.35) which means 'Happy Joe was raving' (p.59). They are also evasive with language. For instance Arturo explains to Al'Haji just before he boards the helicopter that "Ricky's staying with" (p.39) him which implies that "Ricardo's sole purpose in Orange Estate was to keep an eye on him" (p.59). The language too can degenerate into something sinister and obscene, thus betraying their roots. Spinelli (Arturo) warns Al Haji for getting unnecessarily ambitious;

> 'You came from nothing and that's where you are going if you don't get your shit together. You screwed up the mary jane, you are screwing up the ivory and the currency deals'..... (p.35).

The language betrays their mentality as well, which is a weird combination of shrewdness and shallowness. The following conversation is explanatory enough:

> 'And I can't afford to have a wanted convict around here,' Al said acidly.
> 'Hey watch the vocabulary', the Italian said glancing over Al's shoulders to the steps where Ricardo

> sat, his ice cold eyes watching them. 'Convict! Happy Joe wouldn't be happy to know his godson is a convict' (p.40).

Apparently, Al Haji has forgotten so soon that he is a fugitive on the run. Arturo who knows this but does not want to tell him, seriously indicts him in a mild language.

Ricardo ultimately stays with Al Haji in the estate, but does he do his surveillance job well? This brings to attention another aspect of betrayal known as 'double and counter-double cross'. The relationship between Al Haji and Ricardo is inevitably far from cordial. The former warns the latter on a serious note:

> You are here as my guest and there are a few things I'd like you to note. First, you will not try to leave the estate without my permission. The West Wing, our private lounge and bedrooms are out of bounds to you. You will not come to my study unless requested to, and always knock before you enter. The kitchen is out of bounds to all but my wife, Mimi and the kitchen personnel ..... (p.43).

Ricardo does not only break these rules, thus undermining the powers of Al Haji, he forces open the latter's safe from whence he discovers that Al Haji has been cheating the Delorie Family. While there is no questioning the fact that Al Haji's 'dubious' activities constitute a betrayal of trust, they are mild compared to what Ricardo does. For instance, on 'catching'

Al Haji, Ricardo has remarked menacingly:

> not only are you screwing up the scene, you're also fiddling with the records, and going against orders. Running a private protection racket against orders, for heaven's sake (p.116).

Although Ricardo claims to frown at Al Haji's running of a private racket, he does not report him to Happy Joe, instead he teams up with Al Haji to perpetuate what he considers are "against orders" (p.116). This is betrayal of trust when it is remembered that "Ricardo's sole purpose in Orange Estate was to keep an eye on" (p.59). Al Haji. This however, does not preclude the perceptive reader from arguing that had Ricardo reported Al Haji to the Delorie Family, the consequences would have been grave on both sides since Al Haji has carefully insured his life against assassination.

In spite of these conflicting arguments, the over all impression created is that the underworld is a world of double-dealing and double-cross.

The novel suggests that Al Haji and Ricardo are not abberrations, but are part and parcel of a legal system that is not only corrupt and hypocritical, but its perception of justice is trivial, comic and clearly makes a mockery of fighting poaching. For instance, poachers who are supposed to be committed to prison are "let out on stupid technicality" (p.57). In the protracted war between poachers and rangers,

It is almost apparent that the latter "will be decimated in due course" (p.57). Mwangi therefore feels that the struggle is futile. Frank and Kimathi who obviously feel betrayed by this legal system express this feeling in the following words:

> There is something fishy that stinks in this business. You'd think we had stopped enough poachers already. You wipe out a gang today and you run into two tomorrow. Where the hell do they get all that equipment? (p.51).

The attitude of the major characters, Kimathi and Frank to all these is resignation, for they do no more than grumble to themselves in the heartland of the jungle, far away from the courtrooms and police stations.

While Mwangi maintains that the judiciary circumvents the law, he quickly adds that some individuals like Arturo also betray. However, although Mwangi tries to portray Arturo as a cold, ruthless hang man, as the story develops it is noticed that he is affable and kind. So, it is a different Arturo from the one the author tries to paint that betrays his associates in the headquarters to Al Haji:

> Some fellows back there think we should send you on a cruise down the Hudson. You know, without a boat ..... If I were you, I wouldn't accept any sudden invitations to New York (p.38).

This change in loyalty avails the reader the

opportunity of knowing that even in the underworld there is morality once in a while. It also invites comparison with motives in the earlier novels. For instance, while in Taste of Death and Carcase for Hounds, betrayal is concretised through material inducement, in this circumstance, it is begotten by the love of the underdog.

Betrayal assumes an awe-inspiring dimension when Al Haji reveals that his "most frequent guests were corrupt customs officers, law enforcement officers and quite a few members of parliament" (p.8). And understandably, he uses Mike Mzee, a customs officer to clear his guns from "shed number ten" (p.63). This 'corporate' betrayal which is motivated by the desire to get rich quick engenders violence to unacceptable proportions. As in Going Down River Road, nobody frowns at corruption here.

The decision of Kimathi to leave game ranging, even though motivated by marriage is betrayal of companionship. While it is not fraught with "exploitation" like Ben - Ocholla's relationship in Going Down River Road, it nonetheless leaves Frank Burkell derelict and he gasps in anguish, "I don't believe it, ... You could have mentioned it earlier, at least" (p.83). Burkell is not the only person that feels this way.

"J.M. Musyoki, Chief Game Warden, Tsavo East" (p.86)

does not feel any less and he is hesistant to accept Kimathi's resignation. He remarks dourly that "it won't be the same without" (p.88) Kimathi. While Kimathi's is an inadvertent case of betrayal, it still gives the impression of triumph of love over duty.

The City Council is a part of a whole process of betrayal. Like any other organisational structure in the society it has a well defined role; clearing of refuse dumps but it never does this and as a result the streets overflow with rubbish.

Mwangi's response to this is that, although "it is the duty of the City Council to pay for (the) removal" (p.97) of rubbish heaps, individuals should embark on self-help projects. This is why Kimathi replies appropriately that "from now on no relying on anyone. If we want anything done, we do it ouselves" (p.97). Most often, the people of the newly independent African countries are fond of waiting for the government to do things for them. This therefore is an indictment of such lazy people. At the risk of stretching the reader's imagination, it also implies that African countries should endeavour to be self-sufficient.

It is a mixture of disgust and betrayal that runs through Kimathi when he discovers belatedly that Uncle Eater has been paying 'protection' money to the men of the underworld.

Appropriately, he gets very furious with him for doing so. His feeling is predicated on quest for justice but it nevertheless exposes him as some one alienated from the realities of his society. For one who spends a greater part of his life in the jungle, perhaps no less is expected.

If any body deserves the tag of a betrayer in these circumstances therefore, it is the police who are entrusted with the safety of Kenya's citizens but are incapable of discharging their duties. The acceptance of Uncle Eater and the people in the neighbourhood to submit to the terrorism of the gangsters is a recognition of this fact. His thorough understanding of the system makes him to warn Kimathi not to "go to the police" (p.104).

Mwangi seeks to project that this society is ruled by two authorities; the legitimate and the illegitimate. And the supremacy of the latter over the former is responsible for the general insecurity and pervasive violence. Mwangi also implies that the people rever illegal authority more than the legal hence the willingness of "the whole district" (p.103) to pay the ransom. He adds that the reverence of the illegitimate authority does not mean the people want it. The author points out as well that the structure of the underworld is fashioned after that of the legitimate authority which implies that the latter is usurious and unacceptable as well. The

clue to this lies in Kuria's pronouncements. For instance, he calls his 'racket business' tax. In an effort to give legitimacy to his actions, he argues that if the government is not castigated for taxing its citizens for roads, health, and education, nobody has the moral right to indict him for imposing tax on more important things like personal safety. He lectures the intransigent Kimathi:

> This is a rough neighbourhood .... But no strong words, please. We prefer to call it a tax. People pay taxes to the government for education, health, roads. Why not for something more practical like personal security. Tax, not racket, mind you (p.100).

The novel reveals that it is the ordinary people as in the earlier novels who suffer in the power 'tussle' between the police and the gangsters. For example, in submitting to the gangsters, Uncle Eater loses his dignity and wealth. He equally stands the risk of losing his shop to fire or burglars were he to report to the police. On the other hand, he cannot close down the shop because the penalty is equally stiff.

Blackmail which is the other word for betrayal is a weapon commonly employed by criminals against their rivals or enemies. In the Bustrackers, Ricardo uses it effectively to cow Al Haji into submission. "How would you like Happy Joe to know you've been stealing his money?" (p.115) Ricardo threatens Al Haji.

In order to make Ricardo keep this discovery to himself Al Haji agrees to a "fifty-fifty" split of the earnings from the private racket. However, it is not the turning round of Ricardo to blackmail his host that is the crux of the matter here but the consequences of these for long-standing loyalists like Kuria. Because shortly afterwards, Al Haji who is now thoroughly intimidated by Ricardo frames up Kuria to be dealt with. In his bid to make Kuria a scapegoat he accuses him of "too much drinking and laying around on his money" (p.120). This attitude is typical of most third world leaders who at the instance of their erstwhile colonial masters turn around to blame their lieutenants for their own foibles.

The loss of control of the private racket to the burly Italian which symbolises the loss of supremacy by the African leadership is clearly brought out as Ricardo bawls at the sprawled Kuria; "you report to me directly with results" (p.122). Mwangi makes not too new a statement here; there are no permanent friends but interests, and for one to survive, one has to combine wit with double-cross.

Mimi deserves a second mention because she is a clear departure from Mwangi's women in earlier novels. Unlike Sarah and Wini in Kill Me Quick and Going Down River Road respectively, she stays with her husband until he is destroyed. This, however is insignificant compared to her moral mettle. Several times Ricardo

attempts to seduce and blackmail her into sleeping with him but she resists all these. For a woman who "needs two consecutive orgasms every so often", this is a show of moral uprightness. Her portrait therefore is a comment upon the typical African wife who is remarkably different from girl friends like Sarah and Wini. It is also a statement on men like Ricardo who are so morally lax that they do not have respect for marriage and what it stands for. It is significant to note that Mwangi does not frown at Ricardo's excesses or betrayals; it is the other side of 'tourism'. Sexism is one of the prices the leadership will have to pay for putting the interest of the foreigner far and above that of the indigene.

Like Maina in Kill Me Quick, Kimathi wants to survive at all costs. This explains his desperate attempts to escape when seven hoodlums led by Kuria corner him in a cul-de-sac. However, this survival instinct is betrayed as in Maina's case by a slipping leg. But while Maina is a victim of police violence, Kimathi is a victim of criminal violence. The most important thing, however, is that, although they receive dehumanising beatings they do not lose sight of their objective, struggle.

The Bushtrackers demonstrates that the mugging which is intended to break the victims ironically emboldens them in their ways. In spite of this resolve, it is obvious that Kimathi's capacity for action is sur

surpassed by that of thinking. Thus, he cuts for himself a Hamlet like image.

Mwangi nevertheless uses the street mugging to comment further that the danger in the bush which Sofia's father considers so terrible is nothing compared to what lurks in the dark alleys of Nairobi. Mwangi appears to share William Golding's view in Lord of the Flies that violence is inherent in man, and not an exclusive feature of a particular environment. Frank's comments are appropriate here:

> You ..... you and your safe little shop. You thought you were running away from danger coming down to the big civilized city. Man, I'd rather have a dozen poachers gunning for me any time than have a wealthy criminal and two crooked policemen. At least you are allowed to fire back at the poachers (p.157).

The city in the novels of Mwangi continues to be impersonal and destructive. In Going Down River Road and Kill Me Quick, for instance, its destructive influence is felt on Maina and Meja, Ocholla and Ben. In The Bushtrackers, the city nurtures arson, maiming, stealing a nd killing, thus betraying the people who have come to it to make a living. Unlike in the earlier novels, Mwangi gives a clue to why the city continuously negates its essence. According to him:

> After every busy day, shops and offices close down and the populace desert the City centre for the suburbs, leaving the town to the confused tourists, prostitutes and the occasional lost

> drunk ..... To many, Nairobi is just an opening; every one glad to use her, sing praises to her beauty, her conveniences, while loudly denying owing her any loyalty (p.148).

Mwangi appears to argue that Nairobi has become a non-society where all types of vices thrive because the dwellers would rather identify with "some obscure little villagers up in the Highlands" (p.148). The author traces surreptitiously the decline of a humane society to this affective relationship and further observes that, "Unlike the European cities after which she is fashioned, and many of which she is twinned, Nairobi is only a commercial centre" (p.148). This analogy clearly makes betrayers out of the dwellers; this is why it is considered that Mwangi misses the point. He fails to take cognisance of the reality that cities are creations of the colonialists and their surrogates. And more often than not, the culture is at variance with that of the rural-set up. More over, the city functions mainly as an exploiter of labour and resources. This is why it is safer to perceive the attitude of the Highland dwellers as a response.

The fire that razes Shah Drapers to ashes brings out poignantly the incompetence of the police and fire brigade. The fire brigade which is charged with controlling fire disasters watch helplessly as the flames consume the store. While in several respects,

this is betrayal, it also drives home the point that gangsters rule this society. As 'Kimathi broke into a run .... bathed in sudden cold sweat" (p.152) the enormity of the act dawns on the reader.

Betrayal is a pervasive incidence in the society. This explains the paradoxical betrayal of those entrusted with the responsibility of keeping the game reserves free of poachers. Hamadi the poaching Chief reports to Ricardo what his informant at Lali Hills Station has passed on to him:

> He sent to me a message a few days ago that there would be a raid somewhere tomorrow. A hideout I used to store large consignments of goods will be ... hit. What puzzled me most was the fact that I planned to be at the hideout tomorrow morning to collect the last consignment of Al's merchandise ..... (p.165).

The willingness of the informant at Lali Hills Ranger Station to betray for personal benefits is microscomic of the general trend in the society. Mwangi uses him to prove that it is the public officers who swear to protect the public interest that turn around to betray such interests.

The intrigue and counter intrigue between Alhaji and Ricardo Climax in a plot to eliminate the latter. Although Ricardo does not die in the mysterious circumstances arranged by Al-Haji, the contemplation of a plot is sufficient enough to dangle the charge of

betrayal. Moreso, when he is specifically instructed to look after the god son.

On the other hand, Al-Haji merely wants to survive since the continuous stay of Ricardo is a threat to his headship of Delorie Operations in East Africa. And naturally, Ricardo nurses an ambition:

> Keep cool, Ricky, he told himself. You are almost there now ..... If the big black bastard, Al-Haji, should drop dead tonight .... possibilities unlimited .... he could easily find himself head of the Delorie Operations in Eastern Africa. Happy Joe had hinted that much (pp.159-60).

The feud between Al-Haji and Ricardo confirms the conjecture that the underworld is a dehumanised, fast-changing community which regards the loss of one life as an opportunity for another to rise.

While most of the betrayals result from human relationships it is equally true that other factors such as aroma of perfumes and skin pigmentation play a role. For example, what gives Ricardo away in the parkland is his perfume. Frank's "trained nose detected an unfamiliar scent .... the sweetish smell of after shave and cologne" (p.172) and he got ready for the poachers.

The tactical mistake (using of cologne) made by Ricardo teaches him to appreciate the vigilance and diligence of the Africans who have been slaughtering elephants for Al-Haji.

The fire outbreak started by Ricardo which cremates Dan and the animals symbolises the explosion of violence to unacceptable proportions. It also reveals that the government and the rangers are incapable of protecting the wild animals. More significant than all these is the press coverage. Daniel Bokassa who spends the better part of his sixty years protecting game and finally loses his life in the process is "given a six-line paragraph in only one of the newspapers" (p.178). This in many ways, is betrayal, and it goes a long way to expose the type of press this society has.

Kuria's insensibility and greed which ultimately lead to the death of Sofia and Uncle Eater constitute a betrayal to Al Haji's ambition in Eastern Africa because they speed up the process of Al Haji's destruction. Al-Haji recognises this even in rage, and he curses Kuria appropriately: "You damned fool ...." (p.204). But Al Haji hardly has grounds for feeling bitter with him, because Kuria is only following in their crooked steps.

It is significant that Happy Joe himself telephones when the liquidation of his lieutenants is in the process of taking place because it puts him in touch with the reality on the African soil. The gun shots which he hears thousands of miles away tell him that the game is over - at least for now.

The novel with its cinematographic structure is convincing as it is except the racket business which reads like a passage out of The Godfather. The device whereby Kimathi's family is wiped out before he explodes into action invites comparison with themes in 'popular' Hollywood films and is quite objectionable to the serious reader. Although it provides Kimathi with sufficient motive for revenge, this vengeance at best only appeals to infants, and for no other reason than its 'orgistic' display of violence. In the film parlance, the phrase is 'action - packed'. Although Al Haji and his lieutenants are exterminated, there is no guarantee that Guiseppe Delorie with the collusion of some members of the society will not breed another local Champion who will take over from where Al Haji left off.

In spite of Elizabeth Knight's argument that The Bushtrackers is a testimony of Mwangi's versatility in the art of writing, it is nevertheless a break in the consistency in the style of the author. Inspite of its allegorical and melodramatic qualities, The Bushtrackers is essentially a thriller, and thrillers are like petro-chemicals: they burn brightly and die quickly. Consequently, they are not quite the subject of serious critical scrutiny. This however does not imply a total loss of faith in thrillers. Considering that this is true, to what extent, comparatively speaking, has Mwangi succeeded in

mirroring an epoch of betrayal with a thriller? This is the concern of chapter seven which concludes the dissertation.

NOTES

1. Meja Mwangi, The Bushtrackers, Nairobi; London, 1979, p.57. Subsequent page references are in the text.

2. Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, Middlesex: Re-issued in Pelican Books, 1983, p.122.

3. Ibid, p.124.

4. Ibid, p.122.

Chapter Seven

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has availed the reader the opportunity of understanding Mwangi from a new angle by investigating a major dimension in his novels: betrayal. Conclusions have been drawn after a careful study of the novels, and the background that inform them, responses of critics to them, and works of other authors, that examine the same issues and periods, notably Ngugi Wa Thiongo. In the course of the investigation, and in spite of the favourable criticisms Mwangi has received, some important aspects of his works have been neglected and others glibly treated.

For instance, although, Eustace Palmer, Elizabeth Knight, Neil McEwan have in their various ways identified the problems or issues that Mwangi raises in his novels; poverty, deprivation and violence, none has been able to establish as this dissertation has done that these are by-products of betrayal. Thus, their discussions lack the vital theoretical framework on which such serious discussions are based.

For a thorough understanding of the events about which Mwangi writes, the dissertation examines betrayal, Mwangi's social vision and aesthetics under two historical periods: colonialism and neo-colonialism. And at each period, the novelist proves beyond doubt that betrayal is responsible for the unsettling behaviour of his society

even though his response to this varies. He has been able to establish the factors responsible for betrayal, as well as the responses of the betrayed and the betrayers to betrayal. He also registers the struggles of the betrayed and the consequences these have for the entire society.

In recognition of the pattern the historical events take, and not necessarily the sequence in which the novels are written, this dissertation investigates betrayal during the colonial period first. Mwangi recognises that capitalism and colonialism are responsible for the chaos and turbulence in Kenya in the mid twentieth century, and from which conditions for betrayal are nurtured. In his introduction to Ngugi's Weep Not, Child, Ime Ikiddeh writes that "land is therefore the big issue leading to the crisis".[1] In Taste of Death and Carcase for Hounds, Mwangi does not only show that the Mau Mau uprising was one of the consequences of land appropriation, he demonstrates how other colonial excesses such as injustice, brutality, exploitation and marginalisation contribute in a significant manner to the betrayal of the self, the cause and neighbours. He also portrays the unbridled arrogance and complacency as demonstrated by Cowdrey and Kingsley, of the colonial masters and their surrogates as the annexation of the people's land and economy is completed.

The novels which are more or less recreations of the Mau Mau uprising recognise the need of a collective struggle that is capable of routing the oppressors and the betrayers. The struggle that ensues brings bloodshed, deprivation and tremendous suffering to the natives. However, Mwangi recognises that such upheavals are a common feature of oppressed societies the world over. Consequently, his presentation of the rebellion as a mass movement by Kenyans against British imperialism as opposed to the Eurocentric notion that it was a tribal skirmish led by fetish priests, reveals him as an author who is committed to the cause of the people.

Mwangi proceeds to demonstrate the metamorphic processes of betrayal in his novels. As seen in Carcase for Hounds, the colonial masters first used persuasion. For example, Old Mwaniki and his friends are enticed by the colonial administration to a new farm site with promises of education and better living conditions only to find out belatedly that they have only been brought to farm for Farmer Jackson.

In the process of gradual displacement of the peasants, Mwangi demonstrates how the colonial administration adopts the policy of divide and rule to perpetuate betrayal in this society. For example, in Taste of Death and Carcase for Hounds, the appointment of chiefs does not follow the pattern laid down by native customs and regulations. The Chiefs are appointed

by the colonial administration on the basis of their propensity to betray. Consequently, they owe no allegiance to their people but to those who appoint them. The chiefs as exemplified by Kuhuru Wamai in Carcase for Hounds and the unnamed one in Taste of Death carry betrayal to a ridiculous level by moving down edible crops within the vicinity of their village as well as settle personal vendetta. Weru and Old Mwaniki in Carcase for Hounds are some of the victims of Kahuru Wamai, while Mbogo's father and children perish in the hands of the unnamed Chief in Taste of Death.

Mwangi also points out that betrayal obtains as a result of coercion. He convinces the reader that the phenomenon known as colonialism thrives on wholesale and unacceptable violence, and this engenders betrayal. In between the two colonial novels, he successfully demonstrates how some militant characters are compelled to betray through the use of force. In Taste of Death, for instance, committed characters like the General and Kibara are broken and compelled by the colonial forces to betray the cause.

While the collective struggle against the status quo is sufficient proof of rejection of the order imposed on the 'natives', the refusal of some characters to betray until it becomes humanly impossible to continue to do so is further proof of the people's commitment to their objective.

Mwangi manages to state clearly that, there is yet a third group of betrayers which is neither activitated by force nor pervasion. The Karanga woman in Taste of Death belongs to this group. Because this group of betrayers does it for inexplicable reasons, it is hard to contain.

Corporal Njoro in Carcase for Hounds is a betrayer in his own class too. The acceptances to be a colonial police man is enough betrayal, but this is not what sets Njoro apart. It is his willingness to sell his services for personal gains that makes him a betrayer too dangerous. Mwangi demonstrates that Njoro is not only dangerous to his own time and his people but all times and freedom loving people. Thus, the neo-colonial police who are notorious for corruption and violence are the perfections of the Njoros.

Even the self-righteous colonial masters betray in a manner that leaves the reader stunned. For instance, the attitude of the colonial business man as epitomized by farmer Jackson is sufficient proof of this. He values his'precious' trees more than the lives of the Africans who work for him, and this goes a long way to reveal the true meaning of 'mission of civilization'. When Farmer Jackson is informed about the death of his cook, Weru, he makes it plain that he should not be disturbed with trivialties such as the murder of 'niggers'. Mwangi makes this known that it is another dimension of

betrayal. And he could not be nearer the truth when it is remembered that the British came on a 'mission of civilization'.

Betrayal has far reaching effects on the people. However, while it elevates the betrayer in the eyes of the colonial administration, it reduces him to a despicable object before the betrayed. He also inspires awe and fear in the people as is evidenced by the Karanga woman and the Chief in Taste of Death, and Kahuru Wamai in Carcase for Hounds. Consequently, betrayal weakens the resolve of the people. In the final analysis, it only postpones the independence, it does not prevent it.

Mwangi recreates convincingly the dominance, dependency and war created by betrayal and the responses of his people to these. While mal-administration, gross abuse of power and brutality are some of the immediate causes of the war, Mwangi traces the fundamental cause to the determination of his people to renounce an unjust order. The suppression of the movement is as ruthless as the movement is fanatical.

Mwangi neither muffles nor amplifies the reactions of the masses to this macabre life style. In the novels, he employs linear exposition, flashback and double-plot to bring out the actualities of the war. He periscopes the struggle and its attendant betrayals

both in the villages and in the bush. This suggests that everywhere is a battle field. In all, the people are shown to resent the unjust order imposed on them. Although they suffer immeasurably during the struggle, they do not for a moment regret their action.

As far as the colonial novels are concerned, Mwangi is a historian who is very close to his source. He is objective and disapassionate, yet convincing. This disappasionate method differs him from Ngugi who is emotionally involved in his narrative, especially Weep, Not Child. However, this is where the difference ends, for the two writers have written on the same event and have shown that they have faith in struggle as the only means to change the system.

Mwangi employs a large cast of characters but two who are usually friends always stand out. For instance, in Taste of Death, it is Kariuki and Mbogo, while in Carcase for Hound, it is Haraka and Kimamo. The same thing applies to the neo-colonial novels which are examined in the subsequent pages. This does not mean that the select characters are estranged from their people. They are no more than representive figures of their people.

Mwangi's characters are common people in a liberation struggle. Thus, they are confronted with seemingly insurmountable problems which inevitably lead to the betrayal of one another and the cause.

Mwangi however, does not come outrightly to condemn the betrayers even though he does not approve of it. He sees it as a manifestation of weakness as well as the erosion of the peoples will, which only collective force can conquer. In Taste of Death, for instance, Kariuki counsels his colleagues against condemning Kibara who brings the soldiers. He implores them to see the man more as a victim than a betrayer. It is the same Kariuki that dissuades Mbogo from giving up struggle through his continuous preachings on the essence of collective struggle.

Mwangi's characters are not caricatures but real human beings who in spite of their susceptibility to betray or brutalise, have mutual respect for each other. For instance, in spite of the antagonism between the colonial and liberation forces, Kingsley and Haraka in Carcase for Hounds acknowledge the intelligence of each other. At the risk of repetition, Captain Kingsley not only respects the guerilla tactics of the forest fighters, he is awed by the sound of the British Patchet which becomes the symbol of Haraka. While Haraka, in spite of his hatred for colonialism, grudgingly admires the haughty Kingsley. Similarly, in Taste of Death, Inspector Cowdrey and Kariuki acknowledge the brilliant and often brutal methods of each other. The success of these colonial novels therefore lies in the author's ability to create convincing characters.

Mwangi's choice of heroes is in the main, revolutionary. He creates heroes that identify with the aspirations of the people. For instance, General Haraka in Carcase for Hounds and the nameless General in Taste of Death are leaders more by accident than arrangement, for they do not belong to any lineage of Kingship. The people accept their leadership out of the recognition of their individual merits. Above all these, Mwangi does not idiolise his heroes. Rather than give them unconvincing roles as is with some committed writers, Mwangi introduces a touch of realism. Consequently, the General betrays in Karima prison like any other commoner.

Mwangi is equally cautious with the treatment of his characters by according to them their proper merits in the struggle. This contrasts sharply with some colonial novels, especially Achebe's Things Fall Apart where the struggle appears to take place between only the lords of the land and the white man. Furthermore, Mwangi does not suppress the real objective differences between the conflicting groups or classes within the indigenous system. Instead, he exposes the ignominious role played by the Chiefs in the two novels. By directing his attack on these black men, Mwangi takes the conflict beyond the realms of race.

While in Carcase for Hounds, betrayal leads to the wiping out of a band of forest fighters symbolising

disaster and not defeat for the forest fighters, the same cannot be said of Tast of Death. Although fraught with betrayals, independence is won at the end of the novel. In as much as victory belongs to the forest fighters, Mwangi presents another dilemma: that is the reluctance of the colonial masters to relinguish power, and the hesitance of the people to embrace freedom as symbolised by Inspector Cowdrey and Mbogo respectively. In a weird manner, they are both afraid of freedom. In several ways this foot-dragging turns out to be prophetic because independence proves to be a negation of dreams as the new leadership in collusion with ex-colonial masters perpetrate a 'new' socio-political culture known as neo-colonialism. This notwithstanding, the colonial novels are optismistic and they go a long way to reveal Mwangi's vision which is embedded in a historical revolutionary struggle against oppression and exploitation.

In his neo-colonial novels, Mwangi writes about hope betrayed. He perceives beyond the precincts of political independence, thus in these novels he consistently frowns at the circus show called independence. Naturally, the national leadership which is the main midwife in the whole crisis comes under serious indictment for exhibiting helplessness and total poverty when the situation calls for action. For instance, in Kill Me Quick, he uses the example of two unemployed youths, Meja and Maina to demonstrate the weakness of

Kenya's economy. According to Mwangi, unemployment which has assumed a national dimension is a negation of independence. He is however not alone in lamenting the betrayed hope. In A Grain of Wheat, Ngugi writes: "the situation and the problems are real - sometimes too painfully real for the peasants who fought the British yet who see all that they fought for being put to one side".[2] Mwangi proves that the new leadership pretends not to know that something very serious has gone wrong with the system. As a result, in Kill Me Quick, his major objective is to bring to the attention of the insouciant leadership, the pathetic reality lived at the backstreets of Nairobi. Thus, the boys experience is a comment upon the socio-economic injustice in the society, for while they waste away at the backstreets, a few leaders glide in automobiles down the mainstreets.

Mwangi demonstrates in a subtle manner that many years after independence, land expropriation remains a major issue. According to Mwangi, the national leadership in a diabolical show of power entrusted sprawling acres of land to a few privileged people like the white farmer in Kill Me Quick, while majority of the people are quartered in sterile, tiny parcels of land as exemplified by Maina's parents. The gravity of this betrayal can only be understood against the background of a people who are predominantly pastoralists and subsistent farmers. More disconsolating is the reality that the pre-independence war which drew much

blood was fought with the sole aim of reclaiming the stolen lands. Mwangi's position is that little or nothing has changed since independence.

Rural-Urban migration which has received prominent attention in many African novels also gets mentioned in these neo-colonial novels. However, Mwangi gives it a re-interpretation. Whereas in some of these novels, rural-urban drift is portrayed as the youths' insatiable lust for the glamour and glitter of the city, Mwangi uses the examples of Ocholla's family in Going Down River Road and the unnamed community in Kill Me Quick to demonstrate that such migrations are caused by the combination of excesses of nature and indifference of the politicians who are so besotted with themselves that they hardly have time for the electorate.

The masses are saddled with the responsibility of choosing leaders for themselves, and often they perform this civic responsibility only to be rewarded with antagonism and neglect as previous examples have shown. While Mwangi amply proves the folly of voting them into power, he equally demonstrates that not to vote the politicians into power attracts their 'divine wrath' and punishment. In Going Down River Road, he presents the dilemma of the masses as an angry landlord forcefully evicts his tenants who refuse to cast their votes for him.

Mwangi is also conscious of problems such as hunger,

disease, shelter and ignorance which he considers as the effects of betrayal. He enacts the cruel destruction of the shanties by the City Council vividly, and he does not leave the reader in doubt that the Council has other motives in addition to keeping the surroundings clean. Soon afterwards, as Going Down River Road reveals, the multi-nationals rear their heads where the shanties hitherto stood.

Thereafter, Mwangi shows with startling clarity, how the national bourgeoisie is used by the international capitalists to the detriment of the masses. The indigenisation of the construction industry and the persistent emphasis on the development of the tourist industry are among the countless instances in which the leadership is outmanoeuvred by foreign capitalists. Consequently, as in Kill Me Quick and The Bushtrackers, the society is ridden with corruption, violence, unemployment and deprivation. Mwnagi's portrayal of the responses of the leadership to these deepening contradictions is farcical and comic, for they strive to convey to the ruled the impression of concern with their plight and the urgent need to tackle this and the general backwardness of their country. The novels reveal that the leaders have only succeeded in taking their countries to the mythological fork road.

Accordingly, the responses of the masses to this unctuous commitment are varied. But by far the

instinct of self-preservation which necessitates the rude severance of otherwise harmonious relationships such as Wini - Ben (Going Down River Road), Razor - Sarah and Meja - Maina (Kill Me Quick) supersedes any other in the novels.

Mwangi manages to show that the contact between the colonial masters and the black elites has warped up the mentality of the latter. Consequently, they prefer to ape their white mentors in mannerism and dressing. Not only that, in the Bushtrackers, the national leadership assisted by 'Western bourgeoisies', superimpose organised large-scale idleness, consumption, prostitution and destruction popularly known as tourism on its people and environment. Mwangi's main concern is not the senseless apemanship but its effect on the psychology of the African and his later day friends. For example, in the construction industry, the lowest paid Indian earns more than the highest paid African for no reason other than the inability of the African to assert his identity.

Mwangi recognises that these individual or and collective failures/treachery have their roots in the colonial designs which the national leadership inherits without modification. And this also is betrayal because this single act has denied the black man the opportunity of self-apprehension. Thus, his neo-colonial novels are a dramatisation of the cyclical nature of betrayal.

Mwangi's characters who are confronted by seemingly insurmountable problems and for whom he demonstrates unsentimental concern are not intellectual snobs but labourers and jobless people who have been confined to the dust bin of history by the apostasy of their leaders.

Mwangi presents silent masses in the face of betrayal or socio-political aggression. In Kill Me Quick, while a few flaunt robust frames, Maina and Meja, representatives of the masses are 'content' to live on left-overs from dust bins! Everything is in a state of decay including men and fruits. Mwangi depicts his characters as cadavers ready to be committed into extinction. In Going Down River Road, the labourers in spite of their Machore-led assembly, are portrayed as silent, impotent majority. In the Bushtrackers, all the characters with the exception of Frank Burkel and Kimathi are pawns in the hands of Al Haji. Even Uncle Eater and the rest of the shop owners who are opposed to Kuria's illegal taxation do not go beyond grumbling to themselves.

Generally, his characters appear like little knots in the impersonal city known the Nairobi. Mwangi establishes that the city which is expected to give jobs and succor to the helpless, betrays these expectations by dehumanising the masses. He proves this point by using the experiences of Meja and Maina in

Kill Me Quick, Ocholla and Ben in Going Down River Road and Frank Burkel and Kimathi in The Bushtrackers. These humane characters eventually end up as killers in one way or the other. Mwangi however, does not think they are murderers, since they are merely responding to the intrigues of their environment.

In spite of the vagaries of the city, Mwangi's characters are surprisingly happy. This suggests perhaps without their knowing it that they want to survive. For example Meja and Maina in Kill Me Quick do not for a moment leave the reader in doubt that that they want to survive. So do Ocholla, Ben and other nameless characters in Going Down River Road. Even members of Razor's gang, (Kill Me Quick) revel in happiness when the going is good. They too want to survive in spite of the great odds against them.

Mwangi's presentation of his characters reveals that the oppressed also betray each other. For instance, apart from prime cases such as Ben-Wini, Razor-Sara, Mwangi records other instances. He however does not moralise these intra-class betrayals. Neil McEwan observes appropriately that Mwangi's intention is to shock society with these realities. The reader, however cannot help adding that it is the determination of the characters to survive that makes them to betray.

Mwangi demonstrates a thorough understanding of his characters. He allows them to speak not only

because he has the sense of the dramatic, he intends to show their speech deficiencies which once again is one of the effects of national leaderships betrayal. In between the lisping of the Asians and the four-letter-words of the black labourers, the national problems/betrayals and responses to them are presented.

In presenting these contradictions or betrayals, Mwangi has a bias for realism. He is down-to-earth and graphic in his descriptions of the society. While he periscopes human relationships, his concern is not for a harmonious society, rather it is man acting out his role in this society. Consequently, we have characters like Meja in Kill Me Quick, and Frank Burkel in The Bushtrackers refusing to sympathise with their friends openly, inspite of their rapport.

Mwangi relies on symbols and images for effedtive comments. In his colonial novels while he makes frequent reference to the setting in the neo-colonial ones, he points accusing fingers at the Development House (Going Down River Road), the white farmer and the local metal buyer (Kill Me Quick) and the Orange Estate(The Bushtrackers)as evidences of betrayal. The stinking gutters and the attendant foul odour as well as the inferno in The Bushtrackers are also symbolic of general decay and pervasive violence.

Mwangi is humorous and witty. But beneath these are cynicism and pessimism: feelings made real by the

failings of those who have the responsibility of making Kenya great. Accordingly, the people do not believe in any body any longer. Not even the police.

Inevitably, Mwangi paints a gloomy picture in his neo-colonial novels. He perceives betrayal as a relative organic reality in every society; be it colonised or independent. He manages to establish that some of the harrowing cases of betrayal in the newly independent. African states are a carry-over of colonial legacy. While in his pre-independence novels, he suggests an organised, violent method of dealing with this situation, he modifies this position in his neo-colonial novels by creating silent masses. This may not be popular with critics but it is more realistic than the position held by some of his predecessors, especially Ngugi and Sembene Ousmane who go to great lengths to stage revolutions not in their societies but in their texts.

While Mwangi is apparently not against a creative mass struggle, having used it in his colonial novels, he insists that for such a struggle to take place in the 'newly' independent African countries, it is incumbent upon the people to recognise betrayal and thus the centrality of human relationship as the fundamental cause of the ills in the society. This approach which gives ample room for individual liberation and scientific proof is considered most

realistic because it is informed by the abuses of the 'colonial revolution'. Rushing to another blood letting without first of all identifying and plugging these mistakes will amount to a cyclical display of hypocrisy and ignorance.

Even if we disagree with this position, we cannot deny that Mwangi has half-solved the problems of the neo-colonial period by identifying their fundamental cause, betrayal. For, in spite of his subtle attacks as against Ngugi's downright preaching, Armah's biting satire and Achebe's tragic lament, his writing is a more perceptive and realistic contribution to this aspect of African writing.

NOTES

1. Ngugi Wa Thiongo, Weep Not, Child, London: 1964, p.XI.

2. Ngugi Wa Thiongo, A Grain of Wheat, London: Heinemann, 1964, p.110.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

Mwangi, Meja. Taste of Death. Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1975.

Mwangi, Meja. Carcase for Hounds. London: Heinemann, 1974.

Mwangi, Meja. Kill Me Quick. London: Heinemann, 1973.

Mwangi, Meja. Going Down River Road. London: Heinemann, 1976.

Mwangi, Meja. The Bushtrackers. London: Longman, Kenya Ltd. 1979.

Mwangi, Meja. The Cockroach Dance .....

SECONDARY SOURCES

Palmer, Eustace. The Growth of the African Novel. London: Heinemann, 1979.

Jones, Eldred and eds. African Literature Today, Number
Palmer, 13. London: Heinemann and Africana Publishing
Eustace. House, 1983.

Jones, Eldred. eds. African Literature Today Number 6.
Palmer,& London: Heinemann and Africana Publishing
Eustace House, 1973.

McEwan, Neil. Africa and the Novel. London: MacMillan 1983.

ACTUALITIES

Ngugi Wa Thiongo. Ngugi Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary. London: Heinemann, 1981.

Mboya, Tom. The Challenge of Nationhood. London: Heinemann, 1970.

Odinga, Oginga. Not Yet Uhuru. London: Heinemann, 1967.

HISTORICAL MATERIAL

Brett, E.A. Colonialism and Underdevelopment in East Africa: The Politics of Economic Change 1919 - 39. London: Heinemann, 1973.

Panaf Great Lives: Kwame Nkrumah. London: Panaf Books Ltd., 1974.

Chabal, Patrick. Amilcar Cabral: Revolutionary Leadership and Peoples War. New York: University of Cambridge, 1983.

Fanon, Frantz. The Wretched of the Earth. London: Penguin, 1963.

Nkrumah, Kwame. Towards Colonial Freedom. London: Panaf, 1973.

Barnett, Donald and Njama, Karari. Mau Mau from Within: An Analysis of Kenya's Peasant Revolt. New York: Modern Reader Paper backs, 1966.

Freire, Paulo. Pedagogy of the Oppressed. New York: The Continum Publishing Corporation, 1982.

Frank, A.G. Latin America, Underdevelopment or Revolution. New York: Monthly Review, 1969.

Cabral, Amilcar. Return to the Source. New York: Monthly Review, 1969.

Nkrumah, Kwame. A Handbook of Revolutionary Warfare: London: Panaf Books Ltd, 1974.

Wilmot, Patrick. Ideology and National Consciousness. Ibadan: Lantern Books, 1980.

Ake, Claude. A Political Economy of Africa. London: Longman, 1981.

Marx/Engels. On Colonialism. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1959.

Towards Ujamaa: 20 Years of TANU Leadership. Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1974.

NOVELS

Ousmane, Sembene. God's bits of Wood. London: Heinemann, 1976.

Ngugi Wa Thiongo. Weep Not, Child. London: Heinemann, 1964.

Soyinka, Wole. The Interpreters. London: Heinemann, 1970.

Achebe, Chinua. Arrow of God. London: Heinemann, 1960.

Oyono, Ferdinand. Houseboy. London: Heinemann, 1966.

Beti, Mongo. The Poor Christ of Bomba. London: Heinemann, 19....

Ousmane, Sembene. The Money-Order. London: Heinemann, 1972.

Ngugi Wa Thiongo. Petals of Blood. London: Heinemann, 1977.

Ngugi Wa Thiongo. A Grain of Wheat: London: Heinemann, 1967.

Armah, Ayi Kwei. The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born. London: Heinemann, 1968.

Samkange, Stanlake. On Trial for My Country. London: Heinemann, 1966.

Golding, William. Lord of the Flies. London: Faber Paperbacks, 1954.

LITERARY CRITICISM

Heywood Christopher ed. Perspectives on African Literature. London. Heinemann, 1971.

Killam. The Novels of Chinua Achebe. N.Y. Africana Publishing Company, 1969.

Roscoe Adrian. Uhuru's Fire. London: C.U.P., 1977.

Nazareth Peter. An African View of Literature. Illinois: North-Western University Press, 1974.

Agetua John. ed. Critics on Chinua Achebe 1970-76. Benin City: Bendel Newspapers Corporation, 1977.

Ogunba Oyin eds. Theatre in Africa. Ibadan: Ibadan
Irele University Press, 1978.
Abiola.

Cook David. African Literature: A Critical View. African Literature Volume I. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1980.

James, Henry. The Art of the Novel. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934.

Forster, E.M. Aspects of the Novel. London: Pengium Books, 1962.

Gardner, Helen. The Business of Criticism, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959.

Krieger, Murray. The Classic Vision: Retreat from Extremity in Modern Literature. Maryland: John Hopkins Press, 1971.

Eagleton, Terry. Literary Theory. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publisher, 1983.

Lukacs, George. The Theory of the Novel. London: Merlin Press, 1978.

Basin, Yevgeney. Semantic Philosophy of Art. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1979.

Belyaev, Albert. The Ideological Struggle and Literature. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1978.

Lenin, Vladimir. On Literature and Art. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1967.

Tibble, Anne. Africa/English Literature: A Survey and Anthology. London: Peter Owen Ltd., 1965. London: Longman Group Ltd. 1977.

Wauthier, Claude. The Literature and Thought of Modern Africa. London: Heinemann, 1962.

Mphahlele, Ezekiel. The African Image. London: Faber and Faber, 1962.

Gakwandi, Shatto. The Novel and Contemporary Experience in Africa. London: Heinemann/Africana Publishing Co., 1977.

Apochi, Ameh. Nigeria Society in the Novels of T.M. Aluko. Unpublished M.A. dissertation. A.B.U. Zaria, 1982.

Ogunjimi, Ezekiel. The Treatment of Neo-Colonialism in the African Novel: A Study of the Novels of Ngugi Wa Thiongo and Sembene Ousmane. Unpublished M.A. dissertation. A.B.U. Zaria, 1981.

Okonkwo, Welson. Mythology and Social Vision in the Novels of Wole Soyinka and Ngugi Wa Thiongo. Unpublished M.A. dissertation. A.B.U., Zaria, 1981.

Nkosi, Lewis. Tasks and Masks: Themes and Styles of African Literature. London: Longman, 1981.

Wellek, Rene & Warren, Austin Theory of Literature. London: Penguin Books, 1949.

Laurence, Margaret. Long Drums and Canon: Nigerian Dramatists and Novelists. Toronto: MacMillan, 1968.

Cartey, Wilfred. Whispers from a Continent. London: Heinemann, 1969.

Obiechina, Emmanuel. Culture, Tradition and Society in the West African Novel. London: Cambridge University Press, 1975.

Obiechina, Emmanuel. An African Popular Literature: A Study of Onitsha Market Pamphlets. London: Cambridge University Press, 1973.

Taiwo, Oladele. Culture and the Nigerian Novel. London: MacMillan, 1976.

Chinweizu, Towards the Decolonisation of African Literature. Enugu: Fourth Dimension, 1980.

JOURNALS

Hansen, Emmanuel. (August 1982) "Culture in Dependent Kenya", Journal of African Marxists. Issue 2.

Abdullah, Sheik Adam. (Feb. 1984), "Imperialism and the Third World Priesthood: Achebe's place in the Intellectual Origins of Nigeria National Thought", Saiwa: A Journal of Communication, Zaria: Department of English, A.B.U., Zaria.

Upah, Benson (1981-82) "The Role of Religion in Kinjikitile and The Trial of Dedan Kimathi" KUKA. Zaria: Dept. of English, A.B.U. Zaria.

MAGAZINES

A Correspondent (April 1985) "Kenya's Challenge", South: The Third World Magazine. London: South Publications.

Ochieng, Philip. (July 1985) "Gun Law in Kenya", New African No.214, London: IC Publications.

Mohammed, Yakubu. (August 12, 1985) "Okello and Okello Ltd", Newswatch. Lagos, Newswatch Communications Ltd.

Dennis, Ferdi. (Feb. 4, 1985) "Savimbi's Unholy War, Concord Weekly. Issue No.26, Lagos: Concord Press of Nigeria Ltd.

Editorial. (March 1986) "Development: Adaptation to Reality", Afrika. Germany: Africa Verlag.

Editorial. (June 1986) "Tokyo: One focus on Africa", Afrika. Germany: Africa Verlag.

Inside Kenya Today. No.2. December 1968, Nairobi: Department of Information.

Mkali, Harid. (July 1985) "The New Frontline", Africa: The International Business Economic Magazine. London: Africa Journal Ltd.

Soyinka, Kayode. (Oct.21, 1985) "Commonwealth is not an Hello Club", Newswatch. Lagos: Newswatch Communications Ltd.

OCLAE: (Feb. 1984) Magazine of the Latin America Continental Students Organization (English Edition), Havana.

NEWSPAPERS

New Nigerian. Editorial, Sept. 30, 1985.

The Guardian. Omo-Osemwingie. "The Undergraduate: Slave to Self and Society" March 10, 1985.

New Nigerian. Egunjobi, J.K. "Drought in Africa: A Recurrent Disaster", May 28, 1986.

Weekly Newsline. Zakari, Danjuma. "A Review of Ngugi's Petals of Blood", Aug.10, 1986.

National Concord. Olewuenyi, Eugene. "A Euro-America Africa", May 1, 1986.

Sunday New Nigerian. Perchonok, Norma. "The Root of Urban Crisis in Nigeria: 1885 - 1985", Nov.24, 1985.

National Concord. Amupitan, Ola, "Wildlife Success", Sept. 19, 1986.

Sunday Triumph. Muhammad, B.Y. "Neo-Colonialism: The New Imperialism", Jan. 19, 1986.

New Nigerian. A Correspondent, "Kenya goes for Economic Growth", May 13, 1975.

New Nigerian. A Correspondent, "Kenya: Death of a Nuisance-Mystery Surrounds MP's disappearance".

INTERVIEWS

Nichols, Lee. Conversations With African Writers. Washington D.C: Voice of America, 1981.

Morell, Karen L. In Person. Washington: University of Washington, 1975.

Kunapipi Volume I Number I. Denmark: Dangaroo Press, 1979.

ESSAYS

Ngugi Wa Thiongo. Writers in Politics. London: Heinemann, 1981.

Ngugi Wa Thiongo. HomeComing.

Ngugi Wa Thiongo. Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature. London: James Currey/Heinemann, 1986.