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FELONIOUSNESS AND SOCIETY: THE EXPRESSION OF THE SELFISH "I" VS THE COMMUNAL  
"WE" IN NGUGI WA THIONG'O A *GRAIN OF WHEAT* AND ALEX LA GUMA'S  
*A WALK IN THE NIGHT*

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ABSTRACT

Apartheid and colonization are some outstanding events in the history of Africa. They have shaped the mentalities of many African intellectuals who, in a way or another, contributed to their implementation or abolition. Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Alex La Guma assigned themselves the duty to denounce the White's colonial domination and the role to renew their independent history from the point where the colonial period broke it off. They have given a vivid and true meaning of the above mentioned events disclosing respectively in *A Grain of Wheat* and *A Walk in the Night* the strengths and weaknesses, the failures and achievements of the Whiteman's invasion in Africa. Hence the necessity to highlight, in this paper, the question of the egotist-minded orientation and the tradition of a communal life philosophy.

Key-words : Childhood, Betrayal, Law, Resistance, Hopelessness, Murder.

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INTRODUCTION

Kenya and South Africa were victims of the dramatic consequences of the Whites' domination. Indeed, dispossessed of their means of survival, Kenyan local farmers, who did not have much room for manoeuvre, converted themselves into job-beggars, living on Mexican breakfasts. To mop up the dirt-poor dirt nap in which they were then drawn, they started selling their sweat of labour to the new 'master'. In so doing, the invaders, by large, turned the Kenya into a camp where life fell to bits. And to eke out a living, the indigenous populations, at the drop of a hat, turned turmoil alike and rushed to burn the midnight oil in the White man's new field.

This dark period of the Kenyan history was and continue to be a source of inspiration and reflexion among many Kenyan men of letters.

To bring on surface the colonial gory system, one of the most famous Kenyan writers, Ngugi wa Thiongo, in most of his literary works, strenuously, enlivens the matter of the colonial enterprise in Africa in general and Kenya in particular. In his combat for the rehabilitation of the ABC of justice and true independence, Ngugi advocates in many of his literary products the idea according to which those who fought the hardest for independence had gained the least.

At the moment when colonization was at the peak of its fame, another form of colonial domination bedded down in the southern part of Africa under the name of apartheid. Implemented in 1948, the apartheid regime gave birth to a society which was organized into a social pyramid with Whites at the top. The black man's dignity and humanity were trampled underfoot by the intruder who considered himself to be God's favourite. Any form of resistance was smothered by the discriminating regime. Consequently, South Africa was fastened down a political and economic system in which there was no room for black and other nonwhite communities to feel free and enjoy justice.

However, although the autochthons did not have elbow room to withstand the white man's terrible onslaughts, they gave themselves over to revolutionary and underground movements through which they fire back to fit out with the necessities of life.

It is in this context of domination and resistance in Kenya and South Africa that we propose to make an in-depth analysis of the notion of Feloniousness through Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* and Alex La Guma's *A Walk in the Night*.

To better apprehend responsibilities, will drill down the impact of the sociological environment on the psychological state and evolution of the guilty character. Indeed, some specific social parameters impacted a lot on the colonizers' and colonized's reactions. Hence the need to look at these social aspects with a magnifying glass to better read the culprit's mind.

### **1. The Metaphor of Childhood and its Psychological Impacts**

The fact of feeling the pressing need to feel free and enjoy mirth can shape a specific character. It can determine the way of life and the psychological reactions of an individual once he or she comes of age. Mugo, in *GW*, was an unfortunate child who had not the opportunity to grow up with his own parents : "Mugo's father and mother died poor, leaving him an only child in the hands of a distant aunt, Waithero" (NgugiwaThiong'o, 1967). His relationships with his choosy aunt found ground on hatred ; what inevitably moulded a particular personality in the orphan child. His childhood was an expression of a threadbare existence. He was daily treated as a good-for-nothing boy enjoying no rights to voice his mind. With neither friends nor playmates, Mugo was secluded and totally cut off the rest of his community. The bedroom he used to share with her aunt would serve as a pen for Waitherero's goats and sheep:

Mugo remembers how he used to sleep on the floor in his aunt's hut, sharing the fire place with goats and sheep. He often crept and crouched near the goats for warmth. In the morning he found his face and clothes covered with ashes, his hands and feet smeared with the goat's chopping (NgugiwaThiong'o, 1967).

Mugo did not profit by a sincere affectivity, his childhood being a god-awful lump sum of boomrang actions from one disaster to another. His upbringing was the least of his aunt's worries. The later, indeed, would put him on the receiving side of brutality and vendetta of hate. Waitherero's inflexible character caused and nourished in his grandson feelings of grudge, and embarrassment. As a result, Mugo chewed his teeth in agony and refused to keep on stomaching the dire straits in which her crisply godmother clocked him. He put drill and sweat in a meant action : to kill his sullen harridan in order to liberate himself from her tormenting presence. Pass it on. Here goes :

One evening the mad thought possessed him [Mugo]. He raged within. Tonight Waitherero was sober. He would use an axe or panga. He would get her by the neck; strangle her with his naked hands. Give me the strength, God. He watched her struggle, like a fly in a spider's hands; her muffled groans and cries for mercy reached his ears. He would press harder, make her feel the power in his man's hands. Blood rushed to his finger-tips, he was breathless, acutely fascinated by the audacity and daring of his own action (NgugiwaThiong'o, 1967).

Waitherero's fraught relations with Mugo resulted in the latter's self-deprecating. He grew up with the sentiment of culpability; thinking that his existence was a source of troubles and worries for his aunt. Any of his gestures would be derided and his intentions misinterpreted. The narrator highlights:

The more feeble she became, the more she hatred him. Whatever he did or made, she would deride his efforts. So Mugo was haunted by the image of his own inadequacy. She had a way of getting at

him, a question maybe, about his clothes, his face, or hands that made all his pride tumble down. He pretended to ignore her opinions; but how could he shut his eyes to her oblique smiles and looks? (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1967).

However, Waitherero's death broke the vicious circle in which Mugo was confined. But his bitter experiences as a child gave birth to "his neurosis." (David Cook & Michael Okenimkpe 1997). Actually, his liberation from the physical presence of his aunt does not, for all that, free him from the image of his troublesome childhood. He retires himself in a world of his own. His dreams which consist in leading a peaceful life, experiencing, richness and nobility urge him to part with his fellows. The singularity of his childhood prevents him from being aware of his belonging to and his indissoluble link with a community. His clansmen's philosophy, their commitment to the struggle for independence appear to him as absurdities. Their altruism and patriotism, indeed, awake in Mugo feelings of fear, reprobation and aggressiveness. He becomes a solitary who lingers on his "pragmatic self interest." (David Cook & Michael Okenimkpe, 1997). The craving desire to protect his life, motivates the scum of Thabai to hold the others, he considers to be troublemakers, in contempt. And caught in a mire of blind emotions, Mugo lays the blame on the chief of the Mau Mau freedom fighters who disturbs his unworried existence. He expresses his fear and hate in this way:

Why should Kihika drag me into a struggle and problems I have not created? Why? He is not satisfied with butchering men and women and children. He must call on me to bath in blood. I am not his brother. I am not his sister. I have not done harm to anybody. I only looked after my little shamba and crops (NgugiwaThiong'o, 1967).

Mugo's weakness lies in his incapacity to bury his past and turn over a new leaf. He is always hunted by the metaphor of his childhood which impacts profoundly on his reactions. Actually, Waitherero's grandson does neither want to sympathize nor to join up the Mau Mau revolutionaries who fight on behalf of justice and freedom. He believes that social interactions can endanger his being and compromise his chances to experience a rosy future. Given that he is not "ready for death" (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1967), he manages to remain aloof from the world of the others which he views as the world of evil. The narrator illustrates:

Mugo was deeply afflicted and confused because all his life he had avoided conflicts: at home, or at school, he rarely joined the company of the other boys for fear of being involved in brawls that might ruin his chances of a better future. His argument went like this: if you don't traffic with evil, then evil ought not to touch you; if you leave people alone, then they ought to leave you alone (NgugiwaThiong'o, 1967).

This orientation enables him to be saved temporarily from the heavy arms of the white man and the wretched life led by Kihika and his fellows in the forest. The daily oppression and hide-and-seek game played by District Officers and the local community's members was the drama of a catch 22 situation that cheated his life off. Mugo strives in the fringe of society endeavouring at all cost to ignore all the troubles confronting his immediate environment. He is not prepared and does not want to meet the challenge of the daily grinds of his fellow citizens. Consequently, nobody has a right to interfere with his lonely life : "A few minutes ago - before Kihika intruded his life - the future held promise. [But now] he expected police or homeguards to come, arrest him or shoot him dead" (NgugiwaThiong'o, 1967).

Mugo's disappointment and bitterness are worsened by his doubtful and hesitating mind. He finds himself in a situation of making "a moral choice" (David Cook & Michael Okenimkpe, 1997), he is caught between the devil and the deep blue sea. He vows: "if I don't serve Kihika he'll kill me [...] if I work for him the government will catch me. The white man has long arms. And they'll hang me" (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1967). Mugo's dreadful fright, adding further to "the price on Kihika's head" (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1967), urges him to make "the wrong choice [...] without realizing the impact of such a choice." (Indrasena Reddy, 1994). He thinks that with the amount of money he can gain from his betrayal to Kihika, he can improve his social standing through the achievement of these lofty dreams:

He would buy more land. He would build a big house. He would then find a woman for a wife and get children. Now pictures of various girls he had seen in the village passed through his mind. He would

flash his victory before the eyes of his aunt's ghost. His place in the society would be established. He would be half-way on the road to power. And what is greatness but power? What's power? [...] to be great you must stand in such a place that you can dispense pain and death to others without anyone asking questions. Like a headmaster, a judge, a governor (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1967).

Mugo denounces the chief of the rebellion to the white police. Kihika is then arrested, manhandled, and hung to death on a tree.

If the individual fails to appreciate properly the contentions, challenges and engagements his community grapples with, he runs the risk of misbehaving and therefore prejudices his own society. When he retires himself from the mainstream of his fellows, he may fall prey to selfishness and brace up for his own survival. He can be exposed to the inevitable desire to thwart the way of salvation for the age-group he belongs to. He may tend to pull himself together and set a conduct of his own that he thinks can ensure the attainment of his leaps and bounds. He may be blurred by the temptation to sacrifice anyone or anything that may stand as a threat to his set purpose. Mugo falls in this category of individuals. Indeed, his strong yearning to freedom emerges as a double-sided medal that expresses, on the one hand, risk and adventure and on the hand, a state of tranquility. When from outside, his peaceful universe is brushed up by Kihika intrusion, he finds himself in a world of conflictual forces. He, therefore, turns into a dissonant performer in his elan as a lone actor in his community. Ins and outs of his conscience grapple with a radical dualism that condemns him in a feeling of tribulation. The wall of personal interest and hatred brush him aside from the rest of his community. And in his long row to hoe his social and absolute isolation, he bales reason and reasoning out of his existence.

At length, the fact that the orphan child denounces Kihika to remain out of any political or social hot waters is understandable. But, his decision to betray the murderer of Robson to get money is unacceptable.

Furthermore, Mugo's childhood experiences are, to a large extent, comparable to that of Willieboy in WN. Willieboy was born in an impoverished family in which the law of the strongest was the rule of the house. In his capacities as a leftist writer, La Guma fictionalizes conjugal disputes among the Coloureds as a consequence of their down and out life and therefore of their incapacity to take care of themselves and their offspring. Willieboy's father would beat horrifyingly his wife. He would come back home drunk and in a baw with the goodness to purge the yoke of his rage and life of lack on Willieboy's mother. His brutal attitude bore a sadistic face, for it was a means to satisfy an authoritative desire. Her helpless wife who would regard herself as a victim of unjust beatings would take vengeance on her son, Willieboy. The latter's life was subjugated to his parent's austere conjugal life. The narrator broods over the past of Willieboy's family to mention:

His mother beat him at the slightest provocation and he knew that she was wreaking vengeance upon him for the beatings she received from his father. His father came home drunk most nights and beat his mother crouched in a corner of the room shrieked and whimpered for mercy. When his father was through with her he turned on Willieboy, but sometimes he managed to escape from the room and did not return until late in the night when the father was snoring drunkenly and his mother had cried herself to sleep. His mother unable to defend herself against her husband took revenge for her whippings on Willieboy (Alex La Guma, 1967).

It is in this life of jungle that Willieboy grew up. A family situation which, in an indelible way, affected his way of thinking and acting.

On top of the cruel punishment he received from his parents, Willieboy, like many children in South African slums, did not benefit from an adequate upbringing and careering. He moves over Mugo in *AGrain of Wheat*, sharing with him the dribs and drabs they content themselves with in their violent world of cross-currents of hate and errancy. The two children share a similar childhood and seem to face the same destiny that finds ground on exclusion and loneliness.

He was left to cope by his own. Therefore, he grew up to become an easy prey to delinquency and consequently to the brutal force of the law. From the tender age of seven indeed, Willieboy was sent "to the arena of adulthood" (V.M. Maqagi, 1981) where he attempted to exert a trade that was very different from his

early dream. In effect, he nourished the dream to become, like Mugo, a powerful man, a big shot. He dreamt of rising from rags to comfort and wealth.

He [Willieboy] was also aware of his inferiority. All his youthful he had cherished dreams of becoming a big shot. He had seen others to rise to some sort of power in the confined underworld of this district [District Six] and found himself left behind [...]. He had affected a slouch wore gaudy shirts and peg bottomed trousers brushed his hair into flamboyant peak. He had been thinking of piercing one ear and decorating it with a gold ring [...] (Alex La Guma, 1967).

Unfortunately, this dream is smothered by the unfavourable conditions of his social environment. After having experienced a trade which proved to be more a servile task than a source of happiness and a means of subsistence, Willieboy becomes "a product of material deprivation and a consequent depravity of moral values." (BalasubramanyamChandramohan, 1992 ). The perpetual risk of being evaluated, howled, and bedevilled shapes a "sense of inadequacy" (BalasubramanyamChandramohan 1992) in the young boy. He adopts therefore, a way of life grounded on indolence and bone-idledness. Balasubramanyam sheds a bright flash on: "His resistance to social conditions takes the forms of a nonchalant attitude." (BalasubramanyamChandramohan, 1992). The feelings to evolve in a troublesome family are worsened by sentiments of alienation and dereliction. He turns into a tramp who relies on a begging bowl philosophy to meet his needs. His ungrateful experiences as a child make him find no point in working for a White or a Nonwhite. In a discussion with Adonis, Willieboy reveals: "I never work for no white john. Not even brown one. To hell with work. Work, work, work, work, where does it get you? Not me pally" (Alex La Guma, 1967).

The non-visibility of his efforts persuades him of the uselessness of hard work. The meaninglessness of his self-denial, combined with the discriminating economic system in which he is mangled, let him believe that however much his efforts may be, however strong his will to work into opulence may sound, he will never be out of a bone-crunching destitution. Hence his nimble-footed walk in the night of individualism.

Through the character of Willieboy, La Guma fictionalizes the social mess in which the youth of South African ghettos are confined. They don't take advantage of any carefreeness as children. As adolescents or adults, they find themselves in delicate second-best positions. Either they accept the exploitative economic system or join the ranks of the perpetual jobless or gangsters to make a living.

Mugo and Willieboy are products of their childhoods. Their dejection and anxiety bear the veil of hostility and denial. Their concerns turn upside down their psyche and drag their will towards an evil faintness that forebodes a wrong end. Their social worries turn into giddiness that pull them out of ongoing social and political realities and, consequently, endanger their stand to leave out of troubled-waters. The abgrund they manage to escape from is inescapably link to the destiny of the society to whom they belong. Their reactions vis-à-vis their communities, their families are deeply modelled by their incomplete blooming as children. However, their betrayals and selfishness remain criminal and blameful attitudes.

Ngugi's and La Guma's sound like the Negro-African cannot afford a lonely life. He is always expected to live in a clan or a community. His life cannot but be meaningful only in a collective expression. Therefore, to exist means to live with and share with fellows.

## **2. The Expression of Treason and Opportunism**

The African resistance against the colonial occupation was thwarted in many African countries by the disloyal attitude of homeguards or collaborators. In Kenya, the British settlement and establishment of a repressive regime was, to a large extent, facilitated by black sellouts. The latter denied their homeland, their freedom, and culture to outstandingly support the colonialists' egocentric enterprise. Power, safety, and welfare constituted the dangerous baits which lured some natives into betrayal.

Karanja in *AGrain of Wheat* is a perfect illustration of those who failed the communal cause in the days of colonization in Kenya. Like Gikonyo and Kihika, Karanja is animated by the will to take arms and withstand the Whiteman's cruel domination. But he is soon influenced by the desire to become a powerful man in a powerful white regime. He, therefore, betrays his brothers in arm to join the camp of his race's oppressors. To ease his integration into his new community, Karanja plays by the rules, displaying a conformist, loyal, and

submissive character. Consequently, he becomes a trustful citizen in the eyes of the Whites: "He got a job at Githima. And soon his qualities of faithfulness, integrity and courage revealed themselves, and quickly became a trusted servant of the white people at Githima" (NgugiwaThiong'o, 1967). In consideration of these qualities, Karanja is appointed chief among homeguards. Such a social promotion, ever so much liked by him, is the crowning achievement of his career as a supporter of the colonial law. As a chief, the fifth column is given free rein to call the forest fighters and their supporters in order. To achieve successfully his mission, he adopts an unfeeling approach. He ridicules, beats up and kills those who have faith in justice, equality, and freedom. The narrator lifts a veil to let a glint of illustration winks as follows :

[...] Karanja became a chief. Soon he proved himself more terrifying than the one before him. He led other homeguards into the forest to hunt down the Freedom Fighters. It was also during his rule that even the few remaining fit men were taken from the village to the detention camps. He became very strict with curfew laws and forced communal work (NgugiwaThiong'o, 1967).

Karanja stands tall as a heartless leader whose ire or physical presence makes his fellows tremble into fear and panic. He rejoices over breaking down his people whose interests are different from his. The high regard he enjoys from the inhabitants of Thabai and Thompson's satisfaction of his work justify his cold-heartedly committed wrongdoings. His brutality justifies his power and existence as a homeguard. As such, he becomes an assassin of his own kith and kin.

Karanja takes pride in his capacity to destroy everything, anybody he considers to be a threat to the political system and his social and military status. He betrays his friendly relations with all his close friends. Indeed, after being released from prison, Gikonyo goes to report "his arrival in the village to the chief" (NgugiwaThiong'o, 1967) who turns to be Karanja. The latter ignores his friendship with Mumbi's husband to display an authoritative and exacting character that nastily let Gikonyo flat-footed. Karanja makes his former friend aware of the possibility to mean mischief towards him. Humiliated and frustrated, Gikonyo ventures to show a revolting attitude; but his attempt proves useless. Karanja blusters and points a pistol to his head threatening to shoot. Being aware of the sadistic stand of his 'friend', Gikonyo abdicates to avoid the worst. The narrator reports:

Gikonyo sat back in the chair his body shaking visibly; [...] 'you have to learn your lesson. Do you see the watch-tower outside? A word from me and it will be your home for a week or two' [...] Gikonyo could not sort out the feeling and thoughts that whirled through his head: he only knew that the man with whom he had taken an oath to fight the Whiteman was talking to him about the power of the white people, the man with whom he used to play the guitar, who often came to the workshop for gossip, was now shouting at him (NgugiwaThiong'o, 1967).

Karanja's fear to live in an independent Kenya pushes him to carry on his horrendous treatments upon the black community. He aims at minimizing the opportunities of the Mau Mau revolutionaries to achieve their goal which consists in fulfilling the aspirations of the poor masses. He becomes a zombie whose cruelty results in the tragic deaths and the banality of the suffering the natives go through. He views the black 'terrorists' as savage animals whose physical presence clutters the whiteman's tranquility and welfare. His alliance with the colonizer, added to his aim to preserve his respectful personality among his fellow homeguards and indigenous, leads him to cast aspersion on his fellows to better put foot down on his conversion. From an ordinary man, imbue with patriotism, Karanja becomes a brutal mercenary.

Another root cause of Karanja's betrayal is his love for Mumbi. Indeed, the latter turns him the back for Gikonyo is the love of her life. Karanja refuses to be outdone. He turns into "a serious rival" (NgugiwaThiong'o, 1967) for Gikonyo. He cannot understand how Mumbi can come over a "carpenter, without wit or any suavity" (NgugiwaThiong'o, 1967). He who considers himself to be a handsome boy, he who has a soft spot for the darling of Thabai, does not receive any care and attention. His love for Mumbi gets a hold over him and becomes a heavy burden that forges his jealous feeling towards Gikonyo. Karanja's deception reaches its climax when, accompanied with Mumbi, he and Gikonyo run through the forest to join the station. In the mid-way the carpenter and Mumbi stop "to an open place at the centre of the forest" (NgugiwaThiong'o, 1967.) where they are intimate for the first time. At the station, Karanja searches Mumbi in the agitated

crowd but in vain. He automatically infers that "Gikonyo and Mumbi were together, alone, somewhere" (Ngugiwathiong'o, 1967). This idea torments him and sharpens his desire to purge his anger over the girl he loves. His bitterness is voiced out in these words:

How could Mumbi make him pant and sweat in the sun, all for nothing? How could she make him trot ahead, like a child so that she might remain behind with Gikonyo? He thought of rushing back, seek her out, humiliate her, force her to her knees in public, till she cried to him to save her. The impulse to effect this was so strong that he started walking away from the platform even as the thought was forming. Then he stopped, stood, debated whether he ought to run or not, as if the manner of his retreat from the platform would determine the degree of success in his self-appointed mission (NgugiwaThiong'o, 1967).

Mumbi and Gikonyo get married and live happily. However, their conjugal life is troubled by the latter's commitment to the Mau Mau movement. Gikonyo is arrested by the white police and sent to jail. He leaves behind him a distraught, helpless and sad woman.

Furthermore, given that Karanja does not want to be separate from Mumbi, he frees himself from the obligation to liberate Kenya from the stifling grip of the white oppressor. He betrays his oath so as to become a free citizen in Thabai where he remains to try his luck to seduce Mumbi, to convince her to give him a chance. Mumbi reports Karanja's confession: "Mumbi, why do you hate me so? He loved me, he said, and he wanted only me, that he had saved himself from detention and forest for me" (NgugiwaThiong'o, 1967).

Prison and death are the most fearful obstacles that can widen the already existing gap between Mumbi and Karanja. Since he is saved from the bloodthirsty system, Karanja manages to spare Mumbi from exactions of any kinds. He protects her from the homeguards' savage brutality and tolerates her insolent behaviour towards him. "Karanja waited for his chance" (Ngugiwathiong'o 1967); but Mumbi does not give him any. His new military, social status and the imprisonment of Gikonyo in Rira Camp do not change Mumbi's standpoint. Her love for her husband remains vivid and alive. Karanja ventures to propose to her; but "she refused him – with a smile" (Ngugiwathiong'o 1967). He keeps on yearning for her. He puts up with the delay in thunderation, hoping to see his avowed intent crowned by success. He refuses to give a hearing to the other women's solicitations for he only craves for Mumbi's love, which gives a meaning to his betrayal and his life as a whole.

When Gikonyo was taken to detention, Karanja suddenly knew he would never let himself be taken away from Mumbi. He sold the movement and oath secrets, the price of remaining near Mumbi. [...] Women offered their naked bodies to him; even the most respectable came to him by night. But Mumbi, his Mumbi would not yield, and he could never bring himself to force her (NgugiwaThiong'o, 1967).

"All my life, I have run for her" (NgugiwaThiong'o, 1967). This cry of love makes visible the extent to which Karanja is influenced by Mumbi. He prefers to turn a deaf ear to his mother's advice warning him not to "go against the people [for] a man who ignores the voice of his own people comes to no good end" (NgugiwaThiong'o, 1967). For Karanja, Mumbi is more important than the oath to fight for freedom. His love for her is more precious than "the voice of his own people". Karanja's end is not the oath; it is not his people's freedom or well-being. Let alone power, his main concern is nothing but Mumbi. And he does not feel any remorse or regret for having sold out his fatherland in the name of love. Karanja is a predator, a destroyer of the stand-bears of justice and liberty. He is a watchdog of the whiteman's interests, a go-getter whose selfish attitude puts him in an awkward position in the community of his own.

In addition to thwarting the will of his community, the Whiteman's knave actively opposes it for the benefit of the land-grabber. He is left no choice as how best he can possibly find a middle way between conflicting demands from both antagonistic camps. This situation in which he finds himself exposes him to the categorical reject from his very community and develops into blinkers that prevent him from seeing that in a given social crisis no individual can, with impunity, confine the survival of a community into background. Karanja's selfishness is indicative of shot-sightedness, cowardice which can only lead to lowness, betrayal and

loss. He loses his power and his social status. Worse, his dream to live at Mumbi's sides fades away. In his aim to achieve all his dreams to the detriment of his people, Karanja "comes to no go end".

Next to Karanja appears Gikonyo. A man who is an active participant of his community's affairs. He takes the oath to indulge in the executions of the Mau Mau plans. Arrested as a forest fighter, Gikonyo is imprisoned in one of the camps of concentration where he goes through psychological troubles. Daily hunted by the image of his beloved wife, Gikonyo gives way and confesses his oath. He then breaks the bounds which hitherto ties him to the movement of resistance. He dishonours himself in the name of love. Therefore, he comes across a sacred tradition of group solidarity and compromises the cohesiveness of his inmates and all freedom fighters. Like Karanja, Gikonyo is assailed and weakened by his loving sentiments.

His desire to see Mumbi was there. His mind was clear and he knew without guilt, what he was going to do. Word went round. All the detainees of Yala crowded to the walls of their compounds and watched him with chilled hostility. Gikonyo fixed his mind on Mumbi fearing that strength would leave his knees under the silent stare of all the other detainees. He walked on and the sound of his feet on the pavement leading to the office where screening, interrogation and confession were made, seemed, in the absence of the noise, unnecessarily loud. The door closed behind him. The other detainees walked back to their room to wait for another journey. [...] He [Gikonyo] only wanted to see his Mumbi and take up the thread of life where he had left it (NgugiwaThiong'o, 1967).

However, from his betrayal, Gikonyo makes his mea culpa and draws a bitter lesson which teaches him the sense of unfaithfulness and inadequacy. He is utterly disillusioned by his homecoming, for "Thabai was just another detention camp. Would he ever get out of it? But go where?" (NgugiwaThiong'o, 1967).

The colonial and post colonial history of Africa in general and Kenya in particular have been marked by the memorable contribution of the indigenous collaborators who, for different reasons, flouted the combat of liberty and democracy led by the local patriotic movements and political parties. In his writings, Ngugi points at them an accusing finger condemning firmly their dishonourable attitudes.

Like Ngugi, La Guma lays naked, in *A Walk in the Night*, the condemnable cooperation of Coloureds with the white police in the reign of apartheid. John Abrahams is a coloured citizen who displays a conformist and submissive stand vis-à-vis the discriminating legislation. To his mind, any dissident attitude must be reported to the look-out of the people's security. It is in this perspective that he willingly comes to Raalt's help who investigates for the death of Uncle Doughty.

At their arrival to the place of crime, Constable Raalt and his driver find a crowd with "worn, brutalized, wasted slum-scratched faces" (Alex La Guma 1967). Eager to know what happens, Raalt raises his voice to ask: "Nouja, what goes on?" (Alex La Guma 1967)). But his interlocutors prefer to remain uncommunicative. Their reaction puts Raalt in an uncomfortable situation. He therefore angrily shouts: "can't you blerry well talk?" (Alex La Guma 1967). It is at this right moment that John Abrahams detaches himself from the crowd to inform that "There is a dead man upstairs. Looked like murder, Bass" (Alex La Guma 1967). The idea of murder arouses Raalt's curiosity and disrespect towards the coloureds. He mockingly asked Abrahams: "how the hell you know what murder is and what isn't jong?" (Alex La Guma 1967)). Without knowing that he is being ridiculed, John importantly confesses: "Well, Konstabel I reckon I saw who did it" (Alex La Guma 1967). These words which take the turn of betrayal make a voice rise from the crowd: "Hey, joufif' column" (Alex La Guma 1967). Abrahams is outright accused of betrayal. Another man from the crowd warns him of the dangers to cooperate with Whites ;leting him be in the know of whether you are innocent or not, whether you collaborate or not, you will always be under the threat of the repressive justice. However, the warning falls on the deaf ears. Abrahams presents himself as a man who has a good understanding of the law: "Jesus, don't I know the law; I been in court four times all" (Alex La Guma, 1967). He does not know that the law he devotes an entire submission is by Whites and for Whites. He does not understand that the South African legislation is established to deny Nonwhites a right to live decently in a country of justice and equality. Abrahams is not aware of the Manichean status of the juridical status quo in his country. He ingenuously believes in "law and or'er" (Alex La Guma, 1967). Therefore, "With a short shabby pride"(Alex La Guma, 1967) he naively denounces one of his fellows:



Well, Baas. I was standing there in the doorway and this rooker come along and ask me him for a match and he give me one to light my endtjie, my cigarette-end, then he go in upstairs and I stand but there all the time and the next thing I hear a woman screaming and this rooker come running down and almost run over me and I see him running up the street fast. [...] Further I go upstairs, and the people here who live inside also go upstairs and there we see this old man dead (Alex La Guma, 1967). Accompanied with his driver and his witness, Raalt goes upstairs to have a close look at the lifeless corps. After a meticulous observation, Raalt, for further information, demands the interrogation of "the woman who is supposed to have screamed" (Alex La Guma, 1967). But he bumps again on the hostility of the crowd who "said nothing looking away" (Alex La Guma, 1967). The policeman turns towards his only faithful 'dog' he can rely on to catch his prey. Being aware of his fellows' sentiments of fear and disgust, John addresses Raalt: "They won't say a thing, Baas. You know how it is" (Alex La Guma, 1967). To clear the matter up, Abrahams starts answering the police's questions: "He [Uncle Doughty] lived here a long time [...]. He got a pension and was in the big war. I heard him talk about it one [...]. Drank like hell, too" (Alex La Guma, 1967). When it comes to talk about the murderer, Frank Lorenzo bursts into an ireful intervention: "You've said enough already, Johnny" (Alex La Guma, 1967). Frank does not want "The homogenous body"(Kathleen Balutansky, 1989) of the tenement be at cross purposes. Misfortunely his stand is viewed by Raalt as a way of "Defeating the ends of justice" (Alex La Guma, 1967). Under the police pressure, Abrahams takes his courage in both hands to voice out:

He was just a young rooker, Bass. He had on a yellow shirt and a sports coat and had kinky hair. That's all I seen Bass, true as God. That's all. He looked around helplessly and cried out: "well I got to tell what I saw, mustn't I?" (Alex La Guma, 1967)

Like Karanja, the betrayal of Abrahams "has come to no good end". His wrong information result in the death of an innocent young coloured. His collaboration does not even save him from the racist attitude of the white police. Worse, he is regarded by his community as a sellout "Stabbing a man in his back" (Alex La Guma, 1967).

Opportunism is an additional point which constitutes another predicament for the rehabilitation of the coloured's dignity and morality. The non-existence of a unifying and liberating purpose among Coloureds added "to [their] life of grinding poverty" wraps District Six and its dwellers with a thick social security cover which cannot protect them from the discriminating economic system in South Africa. Accordingly, certain individuals launch themselves in abominable activities to gain as much profits as possible.

Through his misdeed, La Guma highlights the naivety, the absence of political awareness among coloureds. Their unconsciousness of the unfairness of the law is a major obstacle, a dark and gloomy veil that prevents the light of unity and solidarity from shining on the enslaved inhabitants of the slump of Cape Town.

Ngugi and La Guma, in *A Grain of Wheat* and *A Walk in the Night*, pinpoint the wrong grain of life that spread the colonized's existence in a night of wrongness that brings them to fall by the wayside of hope and liberty. Definitely, it is worth mentioning that Karanja's, Gikonyo's betrayals on behalf of private concerns, is Ngugi's blatant exposition of the ugly face of the military resistance against colonization in Kenya. Next to "The true christ [who] took up the cross of liberating Kenya" (NgugiwaThiong'o, 1967) were 'Judas' who moved away from their fellows in time of need to fight on the sides of the British forces. As for La Guma, he describes District Six as a place of darkness whose inhabitants are manacled and rooted in a state of a collective impotence. Abrahams' betrayal is a telling sign of the state of political unconsciousness among the alienated coloureds. They are not capable to shift off the blinding veil of apartheid. They fail to control their lives and be masters of their faiths. They are reprimanded by a system which prevents them from thinking out adequate solutions and strategies to have a place in the sun. Their cupidity urges them to indulge in some activities which neither honour their race nor help to find their lost respect and dignity.

### **Conclusion**

Being convinced that "literature is concerned with what any political and economic arrangement does to the spirit and the values governing human relationships"(David Cook & Michael Okenimkpe 1983), Ngugi makes a deep analysis of the Kenyan society through colonization up to the eve of independence. He describes

a people struggling for survival, striving to find a way out how best to dismantle the colonial system in order to build a strong nation with a bright future for all.

In that context of colonial resistance Ngugi sings the praises of the Mau Mau combatants and denounces those whose private interests urge to sellout the communal cause. Mugo and his likes bite the colonialist's bait and fail to come back to the community. Their betrayals edge them definitely out of their society. Mugo lives as an isolated man, a wrong hero, and condemned to death penalty as an unwanted betrayer. Karanja rises in power, reigns as a chief of homeguards before ending up in a life of exile.

The disloyal and guilty attitude of traitors is the wrong seed which grows in the new independent Kenya and whose ill-effects are very visible in *Petals of Blood*, *Devil on the Cross* and *Matigari*. Turning his attention to the effects of independence in Kenya, Okenimkpe concludes: "Kenyan Uhuru itself [is] a giant betrayal of the people who fought for it by those manipulating it."

Apartheid was a similar form of domination. Based on racial classification and separate development, the segregated stratification was a shameful system which provoked appalling dramas in nonwhite families and communities. "Live and let live apart", "separate but equal" were but duperies, senseless concepts which would ironically expose in broad daylight the colonialist's moral decay. To safeguard their political and economic interests the Afrikaners settled down an administrative apparatus which conferred the police specific rights and powers. The police repression took considerable dimensions and opened the way to arbitrary arrest, mistreatments and tragic death. To bear the terrible burden of poverty, the members of the coloured community turn to alcohol. They get drunk to shift into a more peaceable world; where there is no humiliation, no exactions and daily routine of depravity.

Definitely, Both Ngugi and La Guma portray the attitude of their fellows in days of colonization and Apartheid to show out how wrong was the reactions of those who were said to be the victims of unfairness.

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