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**'HAKIYA YA MUNGU'- BETWEEN FACTS AND FICTION: AFRICAN BRAND OF  
DICTATORSHIP, NGUGI WA THIONG'O'S STEREOTYPE IN WIZARD OF THE CROW**

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**ABSTRACT**

Ngugi Wa Thiong'o remains undoubtedly one of the most widely read African writers. He has shown through his writings what it takes for a writer to be bold, fearless and patriotic even against the threats of his life in order to salvage and liberate the humanity of his people. More than any African writer, Ngugi is best known for his literature of revolution and resistance; a literature that injects fire, thunder and burning anger in his readers to stand up in the face of oppression, tyranny, corruption, exploitation and join in the struggle to dethrone political dictators and imperialist governments. His writings have in no doubt contributed to several positive changes and adjustment in the political situation in Kenya. But in his most recent novel, we witness a departure from the common Kenyan course of revolution and emancipation to a writing that articulates the problems of power, neo-colonialism, imperialism, dictatorship and corruption that have become the bane of the African continent. Africa is a country plagued by uncountable stories of poverty, war, dictatorship, exploitation among other sort of tragedies. Ngugi in his *Wizard of the Crow* abandoned the cause of his Kenyan people to address a larger theme of the problems of his African continent. The major problem as he located, is the leadership problem of many African states in the hands of dictators. This paper studied how Ngugi in the course of his bizarre and magical tale, created a stereotype of African brand of dictatorship from which all other dictators could be viewed and from which viewpoint we could collectively seek a solution, a gradual but steady war to end dictatorships and not just to enthrone genuine democracy but an African devoid of Western dependency but on the real personality and pride of the continent.

**INTRODUCTION**

In all parts of the world, writers play very prominent and significant roles in the social re-education, re-orientation and re-direction of their societies. Literature functions and helps to shape our attitudes to life which brings change in society. It is in this regard that Obi opines that literature has become an important means of understanding and interpreting human beings and aspect of society such as politics, religion, economics, social conflicts, class struggles and human conditions through the medium of language (487). Literature has and will continue to play great roles in the interpretation and understanding of the roles, values and actions of man on earth. As a mirror, it reflects not a gory or invented picture, but the true picture of society in its varying dimensions as well as a manifestation of the hard and harsh socio-political, economic and religious realities of society. It hopes in turn to teach, inform, re-address and build on the ethical and moral values of society that will lead the people unto their peace and desired glorious future. Literature has fulfilled this task faithfully

as the society evolves into a more global, modern and civilized world, literature continue to expand and develop into a ready-made weapon of revolution and resistance in other to combat and checkmate the alarming rate of vices that seem to have sprang with the light of the new era. As Ben Obumelu opines "my general conception about literature is that it is like any other plant in the world of man, it is growing all the time; there is no real beginning and probably will be no real end" (35). Charles Nnolim posits that:

Literature as art deploys language embellished with pleasurable accessories to paraphrase Aristotle and it is around the embellished use of language that the creative energy of the story deploys itself. And to invest the story with meaning, there must be some theme, some moral, some philosophy of life and some metaphor of life that tugs at the edges of symbol. As in all art, literature is useful, for as art, it is not a waste of time (3).

Suffice it to say that fiction, the art of novel writing which is one of the genres of literature is often time neglected by some scholars and critics as simply a product of some moments of fantasy and hallucination in a writer's life especially when he finds himself in the other world of imagination located at the palace of the muse. A writer exists and lives in two worlds, the world of reality, our world of flesh and blood and the world of fantasy and imagination. And for many writers, the world of imagination is always the most appealing of all and writers often wish they could all dwell there forever. The Latin word "*fictio*" from which fiction had originated means '*counterfeiting*'. Therefore, some in this regard view fiction as simply a counterfeited account of a presupposed real life event or rather a distorted pictorial presentation of life that is imaginary and has little or nothing to do with the reality of our real world and in view of that, it should not be given any serious and scholarly attention outside its entrainment values to the readers. But over the time, it has been proven that fiction is a reflection of our real life situation, people and events from which we learn and see several facets of our human existence. In view of this and in defense of fiction, Chinua Achebe avers that:

... Art is man's constant effort to create for himself a different order of reality from that which is given to him; an aspiration to provide himself with a second handle on existence through his imagination. In other words, we invent different fictions to help us out of particular problems we encounter in living... The great virtue of literary fiction is that it is able by engaging our imagination and lead us to discovery and recognition by an unexpected and intrusive route. In the words of Kermode, it helps us to locate again the line between the heroic and cowardly when it seems most shadowy and elusive, and it does this by forcing us to encounter the heroic and the cowardly in our own psyche (107).

Thus, little need to be added that fiction is an adaptation of the truth about life, at least the truth from the viewpoint and perspective the writer would want us to look at it. Fiction has the power to transcend us to the height of truth and realities of human existence from which we could make amends to save our humanity from eternal collapse. Between the boundaries of fact and fiction is the truth which many would wish to hide and protect but it can never

efface the fact that truth is there. This is the 'Haki ya Mungu' as Constable A.G obviously in Gikuyu language will cry out in *Wizard of the Crow*; the *Haki ya mungu* of facts and fiction in our real world of flesh and blood. Writers only select materials from our real world and blend them into their fictitious works. Writers across the world have embraced the goal of literature to expose the socio-economic, political and religion conditions around them. This function implies that a writer must have some real sense of vision and commitment to live up to expectations as a writer. It is from this light and dimension that we come to view Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and his over 800 page tome novel, *Wizard of the Crow*. The novel unarguably is the most ambitious and satirical attempt by an African writer in the annals of African literature. A novel filled with metaphysical and surrealist ideas, Ngugi writes to project the course of a powerless continent which he hopes magic could provide the escape; the elixir African continent is in dire need of. In the words of Ugwuanyi Maxwell:

Wizard of the crow is set in the fictional free Republic of Aburiria. For as long as anyone can remember, the country has been under the dictatorship of one known simply as the Ruler. The Ruler is a combination of Idi Amin, Mobutu Sese Seko and Pere Ubu, a larger-than-life figure whose Machiavellian grip on power is so absolute that his ministers trip over each other offering up slavish praises... (226)

He went further to add thus:

Though the novel cast serious aspersions in satirical mode on the internal build-up and the effect of external collaboration of the west in the impoverishment of the African masses, it aptly reflects with great efforts the roles of sycophants in the destruction of African states. This novel, which is arguably, the most voluminous and ambition novel ever written by an African writer is divided into six books that reflect deeply the various intricacies of the governance of the people and how informed the conscious people have equally risen to resist and oppose the draconian rule of dictatorship and oppressive regime. The weakness and ineffectiveness of leadership in Africa is highly exposed with the dictatorial and oppressive tendency of most African showcased ... (226).

The novel *Wizard of the Crow* is highly ambitious and its tentacles very wide. Inside it we see the soul of African continent on the altar of sacrifice surrounded by dictators and evil set of leaders with their long knives, bows, guns and arrows waiting to mob the victim to death. Quite unlike many African writers, Ngugi abandoned the task of engineering and motivating his Kenyan people to address the entire populace of Africa. Though in reality, his Kenyan society might be partakers of the cankers of bad politics and tyrant rule which many if not all Africa nations suffer from; a disease that has made the provision of common ground for sustained and continental development a Herculean task. Each nation is in most occasions wrecked by untold internal problems, violence and tragedy which most times prevent the people to come together with one voice and project the course of making the African continent the best among equals. Rather today we glorify in the relegated position of third world countries; unsure when and from where the redemption and ascension will come from.

Ngugi does not only address his Kenyan society, but Africa at large, quite prodigious one would say and adventurous too and Ngugi could only weave his way out of such honorable attempt by blending oral tradition with magic, metaphysics, surrealism, realism, sorcery and whatever you could decipher in one hand to showcase the seriousness of the degenerated situation of the continent and in the other hand, to highlight the helplessness of the continent which he adds a touch of magic to spice up the people in case the spirit of revolution begins to dwindle and diminish in them. The novel from a distance provided a dramatic scene which we may well analyze in a pictorial form. At the center, we see the soul of the African continent, the remains of her body though still breathing yet almost running out of life but we notice something spectacular, and that is her desire to live and survive against all odds. Surrounding her on the sick bed are our African leaders, armed with guns, clubs, arrows, even grenades discussing how best to murder her without raising unwarranted suspicion. Then from a far distance of the highly secured hospital are citizens, activists, the Nyariwas and Kamitis among other Ngugi's revolutionists hustling to penetrate the hospital to rescue the continent under a highly guarded security. They continue to die in their numbers but refuse to give up. All Ngugi has done is to engineer more hands to join the struggle and to assure them that somehow victory is sure, though Ngugi too realizes the gradual but steady process it has to take and would wish magic could hasten the course of time and event for his characters and continent.

This is the picture, funny and sad as it may be but it tells the story which Ngugi in all his manipulation of words, symbols and adaptation of his rich oral lore seeks to tell. This thought is also captured and expressed by Kanaventi Dominic. According to him:

... Ngugi manages to expose the corruption of contemporary Africa, the encroachment of African authoritarianism and dictatorship, the cruelty and brutality of the once loved by everybody African leaders, and how western aid is abused to prop up the worst dictatorships to survive with their brutality in Africa. In fact it exhibits the irony of how the west appears not to see or notice the corruption, while the people watch hopelessly as their corrupt leaders are wined and dined by the western powers. For daring to speak against them, autocratic African leaders are known to remove their critics through disappearances and traffic accidents ... we see corruption through the pretence and irony of these leaders at forced attendance political rallies, the hired crowds, puppeteering to their leaders tunes. But then governments seem surprised when the truth come out that it may actually be western aid which sustains the dictatorships and in turn the corruption and brutality of the leadership ... (1).

He went further to posit that:

... The story is an exposé of the whiter than white African dictators who betray the cause of the war against white colonialism; who betray the spirit of African nationalism, who will never agree to relinquish power once they have tasted the splendor of presidential palaces ... the quiet noises of the fight for power

among the politicians; the resonating fights from the midnight deals between the politicians and the corrupt government officials and businessmen; then the quiet silence of the lovely morning sun as Africa emerges into another day of corruption. Ngugi brings the reader's nostril to smell the stench of corruption through almost vivid and picturesque views of the uncontrollable smell, emitted by the large African dictators ... (1).

The novel on the other hand shows the people's struggle, the enduring spirit to survive against all odds. Coup begets coup and so the cycle of blood and doom continues to be the game of horror reenacted in the corridor of power in many African states. Even when they proclaim democracy, it is often seem as an emblem, a logo or better still a platform to unleash terror and spell doom on the masses of the people. Democracy becomes a garment, a disguise from whose hidden eyes untold brutality is unleashed on the people. Africa is not a stranger to dictatorship, a situation that has led the continent backwards in human and structural development and one would wonder when all these would finally come to its resting point and be buried away forever. Ngugi has taken the lead, to show us a part of reality which we know but often seem to ignore; a reality which we know but may lack the genuine means to assert the level of damage on the psyche and physiognomy of the continent. So many more is begging to be said about Ngugi and his *Wizard of the Crow* but the fact which shall never be undermined is Ngugi's creation of one of the genuine problems of Africa, the stereotype of her dictators in the character of the Ruler from whom we can access and make valid judgments on how to redeem the continent and free her finally from the hands of the depots. To this we shall now turn.

### **Africa and Dictatorship: An Integral Calculus and Interplay between the Forces of power and Environment**

The African continent is no stranger to dictatorship, bad governance, mismanagement, exploitation, poverty massacre and all sorts of untold terror and brutality yet to be witnessed in some parts of the world today. Africa belong to the third world countries always under the ravaging forces of afflictions, disasters, economic crises, incessant strike actions, dysfunction, high level illiteracy, poverty, massacre and genocide, diseases, hunger, corruption, looting and squandering, ethnic rivalry, tribal indifferences among other undesirable manifestations made possible by lack of well oriented visionary leadership, avarice, materialism and lust for excess power. As Ali Mazrui explains:

... these problems are brought about as a result of African being at the bottom of the global heap, with the Western world at the top. Africa has the largest percentage of poor people, the largest number of low-income countries, the least developed economies, the lowest life expectancy, the most fragile political systems. More so, it is most renewable continent with high incident of HIV/AIDS (whatever relationship there might be between HIV and the collapse of immune systems in Africa) (3).

The African continent has been a continent of horror and unimaginable tragedies. History is full of times when the world has watched the most unjust killings, massacres and genocides committed all around the African continent that the world only stood and marveled at the forces of greed and over-ambition with not due consideration to the values of human life. We recall the Rwandan saga, the Biafran war, Sudan, Somalia, Uganda are among the African countries known for the worst crime against humanity. A clear romance of the history will reveal the shocking realities of millions of lives that have been lost in many parts of Africa in the most brutal and unjust way with no regard for the sanctity of humanity. African is a home of sorry stories and tragedies. Kofi Anyidoho had expressed thus:

African is a homeland that history has often denied and contemporary reality is constantly transforming into a quicksand, a land reputed to be among the best endowed in both human and material resources and yet much better known worldwide for its proverbial conditions of poverty, Africa the birth place of humanity and of human civilization now strangely transformed into expanding graveyards and battlefields for the enactment of some of the contemporary world's worst human tragedies (76).

In all these, the idea of dictatorship seems the greatest of it all and that obvious had motivated Ngugi in his full length novel to portray a prototype picture of a typical African dictator in all his might and valor, with his larger-than-life attributes as he sits on his throne of power unleashing doom and unspeakable havocs on his people. Surrounded by sycophants and political praise singers, the dictator appears to be immune to the venoms and anger of the masses neither does the stench of their suffering, poverty, lamentations, woes, and gnashing of teeth ever find a way to reach his ears. History is filled with time the greatest dictators in Africa have had their time and some still devouring the flesh of their people. African is no stranger to dictatorship and has produced a handful of few who struggled and battled even among themselves to be pronounced the all time dictator of Africa, the worst the continent has ever seen. From the list of top 12 Africa's worst dictators compiled by Dr. Ethiopia, we could at this juncture examine some of these know real life dictators as a way of making gainful meaning to the issues which this paper sets to analyze and to pave way for a deeper understanding of the novel of Ngugi, the *Wizard of the Crow* as well the need for his urgent call for revolution, insurgency from the masses of the people irrespective of the class structure.

On top of the list is Mengistu Haile Mariam who assumed the presidency of Ethiopia in a military coup which ousted Haile Selassie in 1974. His ruthless nature and Russian alliance earned him the name 'The Red Terror'. Record has it that Mengistu during his regime with the help of his so called 'Neighborhood committees' executed over 1.5million of his own people in between 1975 and 1979. As Dr Ethiopia reports, this ranks among the top ten genocides of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Mengistu later escaped to Zimbabwe after being ousted in 1991 and one would wonder why the Ethiopian government has not met with success in their bid to try him for the most serious crime against humanity. Next to the rank is Omar Al-Bashir who seized power in Sudan in 1989 after a military coup against a democratically

elected government. The report from Amnesty International claims that over 1 million people were killed in the Sudanese civil war under his regime and another 9 million in exile. With the imposition of Islamic law (Shariah) he has succeeded to use it to brutally repress the non-Muslim people of Southern Sudan. Sudan is one country under dictatorship of Omar-Al Bashir one can only pray and wish the best for them. Third in the rank is the popular Idi Amin Dada of Uganda, the president of Uganda from 1971 until 1979. Much is to be said about the man who critics easily spot as possessing much of the Ruler exemplified by Ngugi in *Wizard of the Crow*. Idi Amin ceased power in a military coup against the first president of Uganda, Milton Obote. His reign was marked by violence, oppression, terror and brutality, an era that saw to the rise of prisoners who were forced to batter each other to death with sledge hammer. Over 300,000 people were killed by Amin's force. In 1976, Amin declared himself president for life until his defeat; he was a dictator per excellent. He was proclaimed the Africa's Adolph Hitler. Idi Amin fled to Saudi Arabia where he lived till his death which was however not reported. One only would wish that he had lived to see his nemesis. Fourth in the rank is Charles Taylor a dictator that held Liberia to ransom for many years. Next to him is Robert Mugabe, the Zimbabwe's first president since 1980. Though elected, he ranks among the 'fine dictators' which Africa will do a great disservice not to remember with awe and admiration. Next in line is Issayas Afewerki the president of Eritrea. Next to him is Siad Barre the Somalian dictator who seized power in a military coup in 1969 and remained until 1991. His regime claimed over 50,000 and 60,000 people between the year 1988 and 1990 alone. Next in rank is our own Muammar Al Gaddafi who came to power in a coup against the country of Libya in 1969. Gaddafi is one of the longest African dictators, though he had his good sides but not knowing when to relinquish power brought about his most painful death during the just concluded Libyan civil war that saw to the end of Gaddafi's tight grip on the nation.

Laurent Kabila ranks after Gaddafi who overthrew the government of Joseph Mobutu in 1997 in Democratic Republic of Congo. His four year rule coincided with the deaths of around 3.3 million people in the DRC. Hissene Habre from Dr. Ethiopia's ranking is the 10<sup>th</sup> in line. The president of Chad from 1982 until 1990; his secret police assassinated thousands of political opponents. Another African dictator is Jean-Bidel Bokassa the president of Central African Republic from 1966 until 1979. The last in the ranking is Sekou Toure, until his death, Guinea experience a reign of terror, bloodshed and violence yet unknown in the history of the country. This is the list of the top 12 dictators of Africa from Dr. Ethiopia's assessment and one can quickly add the likes of Gen. Sani Abacha of Nigeria who still and will forever remain the worst dictator Nigeria has ever produced. His five years of reign was filled with blood and massacre and saw to the hanging of Ken Saro Wiwa on November 10, 1995, irrespective of all the sanctions from the International Communities. Also is Mubarak of Egypt and a host of other dictators whose the sum total of their efforts and reigns of terror succeeded in dragging the African continent many years backwards in development, human and physical capacity. This report is purely from source gleaned from non literary work. The idea is to add a taproot and give more meaning to the idea that must have triggered Ngugi to write a novel that will hinge on the problems of dictatorship as it cuts across African continent. This is

because fiction is fact embellished under the powers of allegory, metaphysics, hidden metaphors and symbolic ideas. It is in this regard that David Ker emphasized thus:

It is interesting to access the validity of West African novels as social documents, for if literature is relevant at all it is because we can obtain some picture of society and of life from it. However in order to determine how actually certain social types and their behaviours are reproduced in a work of fiction, we must have knowledge of the structure of the society gleaned from other source than purely literary ones (26).

This is what we hope we've been able to do, to look at dictatorship from purely non-literary source as we delve into the prototype of Ngugi in his novel *Wizard of the Crow* to view the stature of African dictators as exemplified by Ngugi in his novel.

### **African Dictator – Ngugi Wa Thiongo's Stereotype in *Wizard of the Crow***

In the novel, *Wizard of the Crow* Ngugi created a perfect stereotype of a larger-than-life African dictator which from whose actions, lust for power, brutality, excess ambition, materialism, greed, tyranny we could make valid assessment and even caricature into the true nature of African dictators, their dreams, fears and personal drives. The novel is set in the free Republic of Aburiria but it could be likened to any African State, Libya, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan, Congo, Uganda and all. Also is the character of the man simply named the Ruler who, depending on the dimension and perspective one choose to look at him could be our very Idi Amin, Mobutu Sese Seko, Sani Abacha, Obote, among other world acclaimed African dictators.

### **The Ruler as a Ruthless Dictator**

The Ruler in the novel is portrayed as a strong and larger-than-life African dictator who delights at the sight of blood, chaos and disorder, a situation that demonstrates his tight grip on the country. This is typical to many of our African dictators and Ngugi evokes these lasting images for posterity and for our communal understanding which is the only way forward for revolution and resistance. His exposure is typical of our brand and stereotype of dictators who live with us and oppress our African continent continually. The Ruler in the novel is such a powerful one, feared and dreaded by all and sundry. Surrounding him are sycophants who sing his praise and often equate him with God. The Ruler too had ambitions of being God too and would not mind sharing His powers. Typical of every dictator, he has seized power with the help of some Western connection and has been in power for so long that he does not even remember how long his reign had been. As the author reports:

He has sat on the throne so long than even he could not remember when his reign began. His rule has no beginning and no end, and judging from the facts one may well believe the claim. Children had been born and had given birth to others and those others to others and soon, and his rule has survived all generation. So that when some people heard that before him there had been a first Ruler they simply shake their heads in disbelief saying, no no, no, those are just the tales of a day dreamer: Aburiria had never had and could not have



another ruler, Because had not this man's reign begun before the world began and would end only after the world has ended? (5)

The reign of the Ruler remained the longest and no one not even the Ruler can ascertain how long he has been in power. In line with this, the picture of Muamar Gaddafi, Mobutu Sese Seko, and Idia Amin comes to mind as they rank among the longest reigned dictators Africa has ever produced. The Ruler delights only in evil and blood of his enemies. He is at all time ready to kill and maim anybody no matter how lowly placed who stands in his way to power and selfish desires. His heart is made of steel and stone, typical of the very hearts of dictators. The Ruler delights in killing and bathes in the blood of his enemies. His best sight is to watch the skeletons and bones of the enemies and opponents he has killed with feelings and burning desire to kill more. Ngugi captures the Ruler in one of his daily rituals:

... Every morning the Ruler, after first bathing in the preserved blood of his enemies, would enter carrying a staff and a fly whisk... What were you after? He would ask the skulls as if they could hear him: This fly whisk, this scepter, this crown? He would pause as if expecting an answer, and when the skulls failed to respond he would burst out in guffaws as if daring them to contradict what he was about to say: I plucked out your tongues and tore your lips to show you that a politician without a mouth is no politician at all... You fucking bastards, it is your own greed and boundless ambitions that let you here. Did you seriously think that you had a chance to overthrow me? Let me tell you. The person who would even dare has not been born, and if he has, he still will have to change himself into a spirit and grow a beard and human hair on his feet. You did not know that, did you? He would add pointing at them with his staff menacingly, his mouth foaming with fury (11).

### **The Ruler as a Lover of Worship**

In the novel, *Wizard of the Crow*, the Ruler is portrayed by Ngugi as a lover of worship and praise singing even when he may not admit it or tries to shy away from it. His best moments are those moments he is been compared as God and he will always treasure and favour the moment as well the symbolism of such comparison. This is typical of many of our African dictators as Ngugi writes to expose, project and satirize. The Ruler delights in the sight of blood and sycophancy. His best moods are whenever there is disaster, chaos and turbulent time and also whenever he watches his two ministers argue and battle for supremacy and favour. Sikiokuu and Machokali had gone to London and Paris to disfigure their eyes and ears because of the Ruler so that Machokali with enlarged eyes will be the Ruler's eyes on his enemies and Sikiokuu will be the ear of the Ruler to hear everything. It was always such a comic sight enjoyed by the both Ruler and the readers to see the two men crucify themselves in the battle for supremacy and political domination. The ministers are always shivering like cowards and children and always willing to obey the rulers last other. They praise the Ruler beyond words and he secretly admires and cherishes their unending political praises. Example could be seen in Sikiokuu's utterances on his knees:

"There is nobody in the whole world" Sikiokuu pleaded tremulously "who does not know that the Ruler is this country and this country is His mighty country ... I am a firm believer that you are the country and the country is you, and I propose that this fact be stated in the constitution ... (161).

This is the kind of praise which delights the ears of the Ruler. He does not in anyway want to have the least inclination about the suffering of the masses. His lust for power has no end and can never be quantified. He is the country and the country is him and he has never for a moment dreamt of relinquishing power. The Ruler voiced this while rebuking Sikiokuu in one of the episodes:

"You little cunt of a man!" the Ruler shouted angrily, "why do you go on and on about my enemies and those of the country? Is there a distinction between me and the country ... (136).

Sikiokuu had quickly saved his head and responded with the most passionate lines and praises the ruler would want to hear at all time on his knees, he had shouted:

"Forgive me, my Lord and master. I wished only to intone your name twice. As with God above! We know him by names. O my Lord, you don't know how sweet your name sounds in the ears of those who truly believe in you and who know that you and the country are one and the same". "That will do, I don't like people comparing me with God", the Ruler said a little mollified (136).

In reality, nothing delights the Ruler more than when been compared with God. Though he pretends to be angry yet he could not help but imagine himself God. This is the true nature of our African dictators who grow in sycophancy and unmerited praises. Ngugi took us into a journey into the inner chambers of power, where plots are hatched and ill-polices taken to harm and oppress. The Ruler would do anything to become God that was why he accepted the birthday gift of Marching to Heaven. The ministers aware of his lustful desires had come up with a plan to build a tower; Marching to Heaven, a tower which was only attempted once in the bible, the tower of Babel:

The whole country, the minister for foreign Affairs was saying, the entire Aburirian populace, had decided unanimously to erect a building such as has never been attempted in history except once by the children of Israel, and even they had failed miserably to complete the House of Babel. Aburiria would now do what the Israelites could not do: raise a building to the very gates of Heaven so that the Ruler could call on God daily to say good morning or good evening or simply how was your day, God? ... (16).

This delighted the Ruler, the idea that he could tower to the heights of God and that idea alone made him to approve an unrealistic project that will not make only the whole inhabitants of Aburiria poor but the whole of Africa at large. Even at that, such "Marching to Heaven" can never be accomplished. But the Ruler is so determined to see it come true that he passed through all the strictures and bizarre sequences of events in his quest to secure a

loan from the Global Bank. Another instance of the ruler and his quest to be like God was exemplified in his visit to the All Saints Cathedral where he rode on a horse and his disciples spreading palm-fronds like the triumphant entry of Jesus Christ:

... The Ruler saw a lone donkey and seeming impulsively as choreographed by his image builders, decided to ride a donkey in imitation of Christ. Some of his secret service agents dressed as ordinary citizens, grabbed some palm leaves from the sellers and lay them on the ground. At the foot of the hill, he got off the donkey and walked the rest of the way. The long camera shots showing the Ruler at foot of the hill and the church on the hill made him look as if he was leading a pilgrimage to the city of God (27).

The dictator's reputation for making ministers plot against ministers, regions rise against regions and communities fight against communities is now legend. He would side one warring faction, only for you to wake up the next morning to find that the dictator has sided with its adversary. The dictator, seemed above it all, looking good as he appealed for peace and understanding would be embraced by all the feuding parties as a *Solomonic* Prince of peace ... (23).

The Ruler's quest to be like God and possess all the powers on the planet was made manifest in his encounter with the wizard of the crow, Kamiti. Rather than seeking from the wizard the solution to several problems and ailment that trouble his life and his country, he was determined to arrest the wizard and by all means possible harness his powers all to himself. He author writes thus:

...Neither could he be left with all the power that the Ruler does not possess! He would have him apprehended and soften him with flattery and promises till he revealed the secrets of his knowledge how to cultivate money trees and divine through mirrors. Having incorporated the powers of the wizard into himself, the Ruler would have him thrown into a dungeon... the Ruler now intended nothing short of becoming sorcerer number one (561).

This is the dream of the Ruler, to acquire the power to the very zenith of it all. This is the stereotype of our African dictators who would want to stay in power for the rest of their lives. Even when the Global Bank refused to grant the loan, the Ruler came back from America with his sickness, his Self Induced Expansion, SID and continued to wreck havoc on society, haunting Kamiti, the wizard of the crow and Nyawira the leader of the Movement for the Voice of the People. The Ruler promotes and dethrones everyone at will. This is the case of his two ministers Sikiokuu and Machokali the moment they fell from his favour. Ngugi has done all to lead us into the psycho-physical disposition of these dictators, their deeds, traits, intrigues and beliefs from which we have a lot to learn. There are also other sides of the Ruler that begs for study in this paper. The Ruler may be ruthless, mean, brutal and hard but he is also a very funny character and possesses a sense of humour one can argue to be rather absurd. Instances of this abound in the novel. Example could be seen whenever he engages his two ministers in rather quite comic situation of their continual struggle to outwit

the other and gain power. Also is the episode of the money which they believe grows on tree. The role which the Ruler played in such bizarre to pluck the branches of trees in the name of Aburiria currency leaves much to be said about the comic nature of the Ruler. Another comic episode worthy of note is his disposition during his Self Induced Expansion, SID, the moment his body grew and expanded all over. It was a sickness even the white men failed to suggest a cure. His comic disposition all through the moments in his days in America is memorable and lasting in the readers mind. This is also a stereotype of our dictators Ngugi would want us to see. The Ruler did everything to stay in power but typical of all dictators they always fall from the instruments of their own making. Coup beget could and that was how Tajirika ousted the Ruler in a place coup and proclaimed himself the new dictator Emperor Titus Flavius Vespasianus Whitehand, a new dawn of dictatorship. But as a patriotic writer, Ngugi could not allow this go unchecked. With the likes of Nyawira, the Ruler had a lot to worry about. First was their opposition of Marching to Heaven. They had arranged plastic snakes to chase people away from the scene and after wards nothing did they not do in their task to thwart the efforts of the Ruler and the Marching to Heaven. They had maintained thus: Marching to Heaven is marching to Hell. Your strings of loans are chains of slavery. You loans are the cause of Begging. We Beggars beg the end of Begging. The march to Heaven is led by Dangerous snakes ... (74).

Nyawira who was later joined by Kamiti held a resistive force at the detriment of their lives against the dictator. And this is the most important message of Ngugi as he proclaims thus: "Physicians do not heal themselves. And our people say that even the most skilled barber needs another to cut his hair ... The problems of the country are ours. Nobody can bear them alone. We cannot run away and leave the affairs of the land to ogres and scorpions. This land is mine. This land is yours. This land is ours. Besides, in Aburiria, there is nowhere to run. As you've said, even these forests are threatened by the greed of those in power (208). This is the most important message of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o if we must reclaim our land. The African continent is ours, and not the dictators, the Idi Amins and Gaddafis but we the black and proud of the African continent and having seen their powers and weakness, it is time to organize for the better!

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, we reaffirm that the African continent is not a stranger to dictatorship and its attendant brutality, terror, bloodshed, massacre and the enactment of the world's worst tragedies. This paper from a purely non-fictional view highlighted on the nature of well known African dictators. This paper does not in any way counter the fact that there are no dictators elsewhere in the world. The history of the western world is filled with horrible stories of the most dehumanizing practices on man in the hands of dictators. We remember Adolf Hitler among other western dictators but we are Africans and concern ourselves with our Africa continent and how best to make it viable and economically befitting for us all. The style of dictatorship and brutal style might differ in Europe, Asia, North America and South America but Africa has a peculiar style, a stereotype which Ngugi vividly painted out in his novel, *Wizard of the Crow*. The novel gives a memorable picture of the large-than-life

dictators and dictators 'per excellence' African nations have witnessed as typified in the character of the Ruler. Much has been said about them but not much has been done to combat this menace. But suffice it to say that Africa has come of age to say no to dictatorship in all its form and usher in genuine democracy, a true government of the people. Ngugi in the novel showed how helpless and desolate the situation has become that he hopes for an escape through magic and metaphysics. Aware of the crucial task ahead, he too accepted the powerfulness of these dictators but cannot succumb to their invincibility. In the manner of fiction where the writer is a god, Ngugi could have made his two most powerful 'sorcerers' and revolutionists to conquer. Nyawira and Kamiti could have succeeded in ousting the Ruler and killing Tajirika, but it was them that narrowly escaped death as a result of Constable A.G's heroic deed. They owe A.G the gratitude for the gift of life as he himself, the all time and all seeing narrator of the story continues to search for the 'thing of life'. Tajirika ascending office to usher another reign of terror shows the powerfulness of the dictators. The horrors of dictatorship in Africa is a cycle, an unending cycle of doom, for the moment a dictator is atop the throne unleashing his style of terror, another dictator is waiting patiently with envy and greed to cling unto power and have his own pound of flesh as if the citizens are guilty and have a hand in the making and breeding of these dictators. This is the typical case of Tajirika in the novel that was favored and pampered by the Ruler unknown to him that power was his destination. Finally he maneuvered the power through a palace coup and declared himself Emperor and saw to the death of 'Baby D'. In the site of Marching to Heaven, Tajirika ordered for the construction of a modern coliseum.

The truth Ngugi wants us to see and learn is that another Tajirika will always be waiting. It is a cycle, the fiasco continues and Africa is doomed if nothing urgently is done. Only in the likes of Nyawira and Kamiti which symbolize me and you lies the beacon of hope for Africa. Nyawira surviving and Kamiti joining the force is a portrayal of the fact that more hands are needed in the struggle irrespective of class status. Viable hands are needed, and the survival of the wizard of crow and the limping witch is a survival of the spirit of resistance which echoes all through the novel. Victory though peace meal is guaranteed. One could only wish and pray that Kamiti and Nyawira will put up the greatest force and struggle possible to save their Aburiria land, but one has to join in the struggle too. Resistance and revolution is the key to answer to all forms of dictatorship on the continent, a case of what has been shown and demonstrated in Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya among other African countries. Much is expected and Ngugi will never rest until the spirit of revolution and patriotism blend together, all towards the task of dethroning not just the dictators but bad political leaders and uplifting the Africa continent to the height it is long overdue for her to occupy.

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