

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The twenty-first century world has been largely constituted by dreams which were subjected to numerous trials and errors before they could be realized. Man is currently flying airplanes at incredible heights and speed, accessing information from the internet, watching world events on a square little box, or talking by phone to people who might be thousands of kilometers away from him or her. All these innovations started as dreams. The vision that Martin Luther King Jr. had about the freedom of the African-Americans in his famous "I have a dream ..." (1985) speech was also a dream that slowly turned into reality. In South Africa, the yearning for freedom as expressed in the Freedom Charter also started as a dream and today all South Africans are entitled to their democratic rights.

Myth is derived from the Greek word *mythos* which means a story or word. Although there are various definitions of myth, Bascom (1965:4), in trying to differentiate between folktales, myths and legends, gives the following definition of myth:

Myths are prose narratives which, in the society in which they are told, are considered to be truthful accounts of what happened in the remote past. They are accepted on faith; they are taught to be believed; and they can be cited as authority in answer to ignorance, doubt, or disbelief. Myths are the embodiment of dogma; they are usually sacred; and they are often associated with theology and ritual. Their main characters are not usually human beings, but they often have human attributes; they are animals, deities, or culture heroes, whose actions are set in an earlier world, when the earth was different from what it is today, or in another world such as the sky or underworld. Myths account for the origin of the world, or mankind, or death, or for the characteristics of birds, animals, geographical features, and the phenomena of nature. They may recount the activities of the deities, their love affairs, their family relationships, their friendships and enmities, their victories and defeats. They may purport to "explain" details of ceremonial paraphernalia or ritual, or why taboos must be observed, but such etiological elements are not confined to myths.

Kermode and Hollander (1973:2324-2325), extend Bacom's definition by mentioning how myths affect literature and how with time the interpretation of myths has changed:

A primitive story explaining the origins of certain phenomena in the world and in human life, and usually embodying gods or other supernatural forces, heroes (men who are either part human and part divine, or are placed between an ordinary mortal and divine being), men, and animals. Literature continues to incorporate myths long after the mythology (the system of stories containing them) ceases to be a matter of actual belief. Moreover, discarded beliefs of all sorts tend to become myths when they are remembered but no longer literally clung to, and are used in literature in a similar way. The classical mythology of the Greeks and Romans was apprehended in this literary, or interpreted, way, even in ancient times. The Gods and heroes and their deeds came to be read as allegory. During the Renaissance, *mythography* - the interpretation of myths in order to make them reveal a moral or historical significance (rather than merely remaining entertaining but insignificant stories) – was extremely important, both for literature and for painting and sculpture. In modern criticism, mythical or *archetypal* situations and personages have been interpreted as being central objects of the work of the imagination.

Wellek and Warren (1977:191) add that “Historically, myth follows and is correlative to ritual; it is the spoken part of ritual; the story which the ritual enacts.” Parrinder (1982:17) states that while details of some myths appear childish, “most myths express serious beliefs in human being, eternity, and God”. He adds that, “Modern psychologists, like Jung, have seen in myths clues to the deepest hopes and fears of mankind, not to be despised as stories, but studied carefully for their revelation of the depth of human nature.” Tanasoiu (2005:114) in turn, defines myths as “sets of simplified beliefs, which may or may not approximate reality, but which give us a sense of our origins, our identity, and our purposes”. In other words, when mankind forge their lives they do so on the basis of recognized and well-established myths. Frye (1979:241) indicates that the term “myth” was used in literary criticism “because myth is and has always been an integral element of literature, the interest of poets in myth and mythology, having been remarkable and constant since Homer's time”. This interest in myth is also manifest in Mahfouz, Ngugi and Mda, as reflected in their use of magic realism. Mahfouz (1959) in the preface to *Children of the Alley* remarks about the ancestor Gabalawi:

But this ancestor of ours is a puzzle! He has lived longer than any man dreams of living – his long life is the stuff of proverbs. He has dwelled aloof in his house for long ages, and no one has seen him since he isolated himself there. The stories of his isolation are bewildering, and perhaps fantasy and rumour have helped to make them so ... He owns everything and everyone in it and everything in the desert around it.

In Ngugi's *The River Between* (1965) when Chege takes Waiyaki to the sacred grove to show him where Gikuyu and Mumbi's feet once stood, the whole episode seems a reverie and as Chege speaks, "his voice vibrated [and] [he] seemed to gain in stature and appearance so that Waiyaki thought him transfigured" (Ngugi, 1965:18). *Devil on the Cross* is also mythical as Cloete (1996:241) observes:

The frame of reference of *Devil on the Cross* is religious and mythical. The title itself, however, immediately reveals the paradoxical nature of Ngugi's own religious stance: instead of the sacrificial Christ on the Cross, Ngugi ironically assigns this position to the Devil. In this novel the Devil is supposed to have been crucified by the workers only to be resurrected by the rich international robbers and thieves. The main discourse of the novel may therefore be summarized as a tussle between God and the Devil, good and bad, oppressed and oppressor, exploited and exploiter. Symbolism, myth, biblical references and parable may be regarded as cornerstones on which Ngugi constructs this discourse.

Ngugi's *Matigari* (1987) too might be read as mythical. Matigari as a character is a mysterious figure who, Christ-like, appears before a group of people who fail to recognize him. For instance, when Matigari enters a restaurant and finds men talking about him this episode ensues:

"My friends! Tell me where in this country one can find truth and justice."

People raised their heads. Who was this who interrupted the sweet tale about Matigari?

"Who are you, Mr Seeker of Truth and Justice?"

"That is who I am," Matigari answered.

"We were just talking about something that might interest you. Let me give you a bit of advice. If you want to hear truth and justice, or just plain truth, go and look for the prophet who has just come to our land."

"Who is he? Where can I find him?"

"He is called Matigari ma Njiruungi. Ngaruro wa Kiriro knows him. Ngaruro was actually with him yesterday" (Ngugi, 1987:75).

The conversation is weird, ironical and comical because even Ngaruro who has met Matigari before fails to recognize him. The speakers mythically equate Matigari to a prophet. Actually Matigari's stature is obscure to most people who describe him as "tiny"; "old" or "a giant" (77).

In Mda's *The Heart of Redness* (2000) there are many incidents of magic realism. The Believers (those people who believe in Nongqawuse's prophecy), are convinced that they see the ancestors together with the new cattle and goats emerge from the sea. For instance, Mda reports:

Whenever Twin's spirit was beginning to flag, he went to the place of miracles with Qukezwa. And there they ate and danced until midnight. They drank sorghum beer. And early in the morning hours they saw cattle in the bushes and in the sea. Some of the people could even see their old friends and relatives who had long been dead. One morning Twin himself saw the risen heroes emerge from the sea. Some were on foot, others were on horseback, passing in glorious but silent parade, then sinking again among the waves (Mda, 2000:98).

Tanasoiu further states that in literature there are two types of myths that have been identified, namely, "foundational" and "eschatological" (2005:116). He mentions that foundation myths are "narratives about the beginnings and the origins of a community, [while] eschatological are based on a vision of the future which makes crude but practical sense of the present". For purposes of this study it is therefore the eschatological myths which will be investigated because besides directing social actions and values, they have an influence on man's religious, political and socio-economic decisions which, to a large extent, underlie man's sense of national identity as explicitly revealed in this study of selected texts depicting the liberating struggles in Mahfouz's, Ngugi's and Mda's works.

In *The Children of the Alley* (1959) Naguib Mahfouz sees science as the only tool left to liberate mankind after Judaism, Christianity and Islam had dismally failed to do so. When Zughlul and his colleagues in *The Cairo Trilogy* (1957) confront the British government about their political rights, they have a dream to free the Egyptians from the tyranny of colonialism and they do not doubt that their dream will be realised. Ngugi's earlier novels, in turn, deal with the dream of the Kenyans to free themselves

from the oppression of British colonialism. An anonymous internet article (<http://www.answers.com/topic/mau-mau-uprising>) maintains that although the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya “did not succeed militarily, [it] did create a rift between the white settler community in Kenya and the Home Office in London that set the stage for Kenyan independence in 1963”. It is apparent that the Mau Mau yearned to liberate the Kenyan people as evidenced in Ngugi’s *Weep Not, Child* (1962) and *A Grain of Wheat* (1967). Likewise, in South Africa Nongqawuse’s prophecy in Mda’s *The Heart of Redness* (2000) was a dream meant to liberate the amaXhosa from British colonialism in spite of the negative outcomes of this prophecy. The underground organisation called the Movement, obviously the ANC and its now defunct military wing, *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (The Spear of the Nation) in Mda’s *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2002), dreamed of liberating South Africans from the apartheid government and succeeded in doing so. Adepitan (1998:24) expresses a concern about the interference of technology in literature as he/she mentions that, “And this is why it is tragic, really very tragic, when our scholars, particularly such of them as are able to understand, get easily sold over to the business of technologisation of literature, denuded of its informing background of myth and meaning”.

1.2 Problem Statement

Visser (2002:40) states that “People turn towards myths for direction and purpose, seeking a hold on life, and hope for a better future”. For any form of liberation to be realised there has to be a dream, a desire, an aspiration, and a strong determination to move from one form of life to another. Just as in fairy tales, there is usually hope for a world that is distinctly more exciting and rewarding than the everyday world people live in. This utopia is exactly what Mahfouz’s, Ngugi’s and Mda’s novels aim to establish. Mahfouz in *The Children of the Alley*, for instance, endeavours to indicate that science may make man’s life more comfortable, productive, free, and safe. Ngugi in *Devil on the Cross* (1982:246) yearns for “a new beginning for a new Earth” while Mda in *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2002) advocates co-operation in a democratic South Africa in which all population groups can live in harmony, love and peace. These three authors have thus employed writing as a means of expressing their dreams to see all mankind liberated from forms of political, socio-economic and

cultural abuse and suffering. The researcher will, therefore, examine the different ways in which the three authors under study have endeavoured to sensitise their readers to be aware of the possibilities of positive change.

Similar to mythical tales and stories in which the heroes usually have strenuous tasks to perform, the heroes in the selected texts by these authors have mammoth tasks to carry out. In mythical stories the heroes may, for instance, have to battle with and slay monsters. In Mahfouz, Ngugi and Mda, some of the monsters to be slain include colonialism, apartheid and patriarchy, the destruction of which will set people free. The colonised had to form movements such as the *Mau Mau* in Kenya or *Umkhonto we Sizwe* in South Africa to counteract the colonizers' resistance to enter into a negotiated settlement. Such movements were met with harsh punitive measures as numerous people were either killed or detained in prisons for years. The research will thus examine the part played by these movements in liberating their own people.

Some liberation dreams are actually influenced by myths which usually evoke the presence of mystery or sacredness as they involve characters that have supernatural qualities, a proto-world setting and plots that may involve interplay between this and the previous world. Gebelawi in *The Children of the Alley* is a mysterious figure who in an ambiguous way influences Gabal, Rifaa and Qassem to liberate the alley from poverty and oppression. Nongqawuse and Nombanda in Mda's *The Heart of Redness* carry the message of freedom from the "new people" in the world of the ancestors to the world of the living. Chege in Ngugi's *The River Between* (1965) is believed to be a seer who "could see visions of the future like Mugo wa Kibiro" (1965:7). Chege eventually influences Waiyaki to view himself as the supposed Messiah. This study will also examine the influence that myths per se have on liberation.

Women have also sought liberation from the traditional patriarchal myth. Abrams (1993:235), remarks that a woman has for centuries been looked down upon as

an other, or a kind of non-man due to her lack of the identifying male organ of male powers and of male character traits that are presumed, in patriarchal view, to have achieved the most important inventions and works of civilization and culture.

Some of Mahfouz's female characters, especially in the first half of *The Cairo Trilogy*, are subordinate and allow themselves to be subjugated, while from the middle to the end of the novel there is a marked change in that they assume more power and assertiveness. Ngugi and Mda frequently depict females who are stronger and more determined than their male counterparts. Examples of strong female characters are Muthoni in *The River Between* and Qukezwa in *The Heart of Redness*. These women openly resist patriarchal beliefs. Koyana (2003:58) asserts that "Qukezwa defines the potential of the new, dynamic African woman", a view supported by Cloete and Madadzhe (2007:12) who mention that "Qukezwa will have the freedom to be an individual who will enjoy the right to articulate her innermost feelings, her sorrows and traumas as well". When authors portray women as capable of exhibiting daring personalities, they demythologise the traditional beliefs about women as always being regarded as inferior. A detailed discussion of the liberation of women from the patriarchal myth will, therefore, be undertaken in this thesis.

While religion is mainly associated with man's salvation, Mahfouz, in *The Cairo Trilogy*, depicts Al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad and his friends' lifestyle by ridiculing and belittling this view. In *The Children of the Alley*, Mahfouz dares to question sensitive issues concerning the various religions which he sees as having failed to liberate mankind. As such, he expresses the view that science may do so. By contrast in Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross* man rejects the myth of Christianity as a liberating tool, politically speaking, and looks elsewhere for liberation.

It should be pointed out that while myth can liberate, it can also be destructive like the Nongqawuse myth in Mda's *The Heart of Redness*. The same can be said about Mahfouz's view of science. It has its negative side as well. El-Enany (1993:143) explicitly states that if science falls in the wrong hands, "it can be a force of suppression rather than of liberation". Another important aspect to note is that myths change with times. For instance, Visser (2002:40) observes that, "Mda's novel (*Ways of Dying*), acknowledges the myths of the twentieth century, but it also rejects them, implying that in this new post-apartheid era a new belief must replace the deficient myths of the dominant culture."

1.3 Aim of the Study

This study aims to investigate myth as a tool of literary, socio-economic, cultural, political, and educational liberation in selected works by Naguib Mahfouz, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Zakes Mda.

1.4 Objectives of the study

To achieve the aim of the study, the following objectives will be pursued:

- To determine the origin of the liberating myths under investigation in the selected texts.
- To assess the influence of myth on the struggle for liberation as reflected in the selected texts.
- To portray the effects of the struggle for liberation and socio-economic, cultural, educational, and political development.
- To examine the role of religion in liberation.
- To examine the role of the portrayal of women in the selected works of Mahfouz, Ngugi and Mda.

1.5 Rationale for the Study

Myth is a concept that has always featured in literature, Western and African alike. It has attracted scholars and researchers from political, religious, social, and economic fields because of its manifestation in man's daily activities. I decided to study myth as a liberating tool as represented in the works of three authors writing from completely different cultural, political and socio-economic backgrounds. These authors also represent the functions of myth from three different time frames. Mahfouz (1911-2006) was an Egyptian, therefore representing North Africa, while Ngugi (1938-) represents East Africa and Mda (1948-) Southern Africa. In addition, Mahfouz's views are currently of special interest because of the increased concern with the political situation in the Middle East as a result of the ongoing struggle between Israel and the Palestinians as well as the Iraqi invasion. Since religious differences play such an important role in these conflicts Islamic beliefs are currently under severe scrutiny. The interest in Mahfouz has even led to a greater demand for the translation of his works from Arabic into English so that they can be read as widely as possible. In addition, Mahfouz was a Nobel Prize winner and a prolific author who produced

over forty novels and about one hundred-and-fifty short stories. Ngugi was chosen as a representative of early African writers. He has extensively relied on assertion of myth through literature as a tool to liberate Kenya from first colonial oppression and later from neo-colonial ills and corruption. Ngugi is also one of the first African writers to publish in English, besides being renowned as a scholar and lecturer at prestigious universities. Zakes Mda, in turn, is generally regarded as perhaps the most important post-apartheid South African novelist. *The Heart of Redness* won both the Commonwealth Prize Fiction (Africa) and the Sunday Times Fiction Award in 2001, while his first novel *Ways of Dying*, won both the M-Net Book Prize and the Olive Schreiner Prize.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in illustrating how myth can liberate or fail to liberate humankind from tyranny and oppression. History or Sociology can only supply hard facts when dealing with liberation issues, while literature provides the aesthetic and aetiological aspects, hence the importance of such studies. In addition, the approach to myth as a liberating tool by examining the works of these three authors together has not yet been undertaken. This study should help in creating a better appreciation of Islamic life and religion while aiding in demythologizing concepts of white supremacy carried out under the auspices of “empire-building and the civilizing mission” (Sewlall, 2003:337), which have hurt Africans for many years. This study intends to benefit fellow researchers and scholars of literature, while it also promotes the idea of the importance of developing and persevering indigenous knowledge systems.

1.7 Research Methodology

The qualitative research method was applied. Cresswell (1994:145) states that “qualitative researchers are interested in the meaning – how people make sense of their lives, experiences, and their structures of the world”. The researcher first examined theoretical sources on myth, mythology and liberation. The researcher will then undertake a close textual analysis of the selected works of Naguib Mahfouz, namely, *The Cairo Trilogy* (1957), *Children of the Alley* (1959); Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s

Weep Not, Child (1962), *The River Between* (1965), *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), *Petals of Blood* (1977), *Devil on the Cross* (1980), and Zakes Mda's *Ways of Dying* (1995), *The Heart of Redness* (2000) and *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2002). Finally, a study of critical works on the selected authors and their study of myth as a liberating tool was undertaken. An internet search for recent information on myth and liberation was done as well.

1.8 Literature Review

Hicks (2002:32) in *Ritual and Belief: Readings in the Anthropology of Religion*, maintains that myth in certain cultures fulfills an indispensable function because, "it expresses, enhances, and codifies belief; it safeguards and enforces morality; it vouches for the efficiency of ritual and contains practical rules for the guidance of man".

Hicks' statement is an assertion that myth is a vital ingredient of human civilization, an opinion also supported by Lande (1998:1) who mentions that myth gives "meaning and understanding to life". Chidester (1992:7) mentions that among South African cultures myth is also "a medium for working out a particular understanding of the social and political conditions of the present world". This view cannot be confined only to South Africa but extends to other countries as well. Trubshaw (2003:2) further states that myths "fulfill a religious function" in society. In Mahfouz's *Children of the Alley* Gabal, Rifaa and Qassem, the analogues of Moses, Jesus and Mohamed, respectively all work hard to fulfill the wishes of Gebelawi.

The literature review first deals with works of writers who have used myth as a liberating tool before examining secondary sources consulted in the course of the preliminary literary investigation to indicate their significance for the present study.

Soyinka's play, *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975), serves as a good example in this instance. The king of an unnamed city has just died, and by tradition, his second-in-command, the Elesin Oba, or the King's horseman, must accompany his lord to the world of the ancestors. However, the Elesin belates himself by a worldly desire of spending his last night with a bride, and before he can complete his act of sacrifice,

he is stopped by Pelkins, the British District Officer, and taken into custody. Consequently, Olunde, Elesin's son, who has recently returned from England where he has been studying medicine, sacrifices his life in his father's stead, "so that the order of the universe may not be upset" (Laersen,1983:99). Certain cultures believe in the fact that the performance of traditional rituals set the afflicted free, psychologically and spiritually. This principle will, for instance, be studied in Ngugi's *The River Between* where Muthoni sacrifices her life because of her conviction that she cannot attain her womanhood and wholeness as a traditional woman without being circumcised, although she is unaware of the dangers involved in the procedure.

With cultural evolution, people frequently create new myths to liberate themselves from time-honoured beliefs. Maru in Bessie Head's novel by the same name, liberates both the downtrodden Masarwa people and the Batswana people from their misconceptions when he marries Margaret Cadmore Junior, who, following local traditions would not be able to marry as he is chief-elect and she is below him in social and cultural status. In Botswana the Bushmen are treated as outcasts and discriminated against because of their otherness. Head (1972:11) herself suffered the injustices of racial discrimination while living in South Africa, hence her bitterness about the treatment of her people: "Of all things that are said of oppressed people, the worst things are said and done to the Bushmen." So when the Masarwa learn of this marriage to one of their own, Bessie Head informs us:

The wind of freedom, which was blowing throughout the world for all people, turned and flowed into the room. As they breathed in the fresh, clear air their humanity awakened. They examined their condition. There was the fetid air, the excreta and the horror of being an oddity of the human race, with half the head of a man and half the body of a donkey...How had they fallen into this condition when, indeed, they were as human as everyone else? They started to run out into the sunlight, then they turned and looked at the dark, small room. They said: "We are not going back there." (1982:128).

The Masarwa never thought they were equal to the Batswana people, who had kept and treated them as their personal slaves for years. Maru's action helps to liberate both the Batswana who suffer from a myth of a superiority complex, as well as the

Masarwa who are victims of an inferiority complex myth based on racial discrimination.

Kuzwayo (1996) in *Call me Woman* describes the watershed incident in the South African liberation struggle when women marched to the Union Buildings in Pretoria on 9 August 1956 to defy the law that all black South Africans, including women, should at all times carry their passbooks with them. In the last three pages of this book she provides a list of South African black women who had qualified as medical doctors and lawyers, to demythologise the idea that medicine and law were men's territories. In the same vein, the young cousins, Nyasha and Tambudzai, in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988), continuously defy Babamukuru's "colonialist's" instructions to attain their personal liberty. Women in Sembene Ousmane's *God's Bits of Wood* (1962) are also willing to sacrifice their lives for their husbands' unconditional employment demands. The works of Kuzwayo, Dangarembga and Ousmane, therefore, demonstrate that women are capable of achieving success in the struggle against patriarchy and colonialism despite their threefold oppression.

Somekh (1973:106) remarks that *The Cairo Trilogy* is an enormous work which portrays the political scene of Egypt, and the daily lives of the middle class Cairene family. He remarks that "the process of change is at the forefront of this work". Admittedly, change in socio-cultural, political and economic activities is at the centre of the novel as will be made evident in the thesis. Somekh (1973: 138) regards *The Children of the Alley* as a blending of a novel and an allegory with an open ending, although he does acknowledge that Mahfouz sees science replacing "the priesthood and religion of the ancient world".

Unlike Somekh, Matti (1994:175) claims that *The Cairo Trilogy* is not a political novel, and that Mahfouz "seeks to show the strength of nationalism and the effect of British occupation on the Egyptian people". He maintains that in *The Children of the Alley* Mahfouz is not concerned with religion, but rather with "social and political issues and the role science plays in them" (Matti, 1994:276). However, Matti's discussion of Mahfouz's vision of science as a liberating tool is striking. It is Matti's submission that

The Children of the Alley is a result of the 1952 Egyptian revolution which overthrew king Farouk but failed to satisfy the high expectations of the new regime.

El-Enany (1993:75), like Somekh, asserts that *The Cairo Trilogy* deals with “political freedom [and] social justice”. He sees *The Children of the Alley* as an attempt at “demythologizing humanity’s religious quest” (El-Enany,1993:142).

Musk (1995) in *Touching the Soul of Islam* assesses what he terms themes in tension. These are themes such as male and female, family relationships, hospitableness, self-control, loyalty, and honour. He notes that Muslims are religious people as evinced by the pilgrimages to shrines and the making of vows, activities seen in abundance in *The Cairo Trilogy*. He states that *The Children of the Alley* “seeks to show the timelessness of human despair and, by implication, the futility of belief in God” (Musk, 1995:168). Although Musk does not make any direct comment about the role of myth as a liberating tool, his general discussion of Islamic beliefs and customs will make an indispensable contribution to this study in providing the necessary background information.

Stewart (1995) in *Unfolding Islam* records prophet Muhammed’s life history as well as the birth and spread of Islam to other countries such as Yaturib, the present-day Medina. After Muhammed’s death Islam branched into Sunni, Shii and Kharijite. Stewart also looks at the changes in Islam as a result of Western religions, politics and ideologies. A noteworthy remark about the prophet is that he “consulted his wives on every aspect of the life of the community” (Stewart, 1995:98). This is an interesting practice in lieu of men of the first generation in the *Trilogy* who keep their women in total subjugation. Stewart’s concern with Muhammed’s life history and the birth of Islam, is valuable if one is to appreciate Arabic literature. As a matter of fact, Qassem’s life history in *The Children of the Alley* is fairly identical to that of Muhammed. In this sense, a reading of Stewart’s text helps one to understand Qassem’s role in the novel.

Egypt’s Struggle for Independence (1965) by Zayid is an account of Egypt’s political events from the onset of the British occupation to around 1936 when it was granted independence. When the Protectorate was proclaimed, Zayid (1965:74) tells us, “it

wounded the feelings of the Egyptian people and increased their hostility towards the British". This dissatisfaction led to national protests resulting in the arrest of some leaders while others such as Zughlul were sent into exile. This confirms what is revealed in *The Cairo Trilogy*. The first book of *The Cairo Trilogy*, 'Palace Walk', begins during World War 1 in 1917 with the bombardment that crippled the Ottomans and ends with the outbreak of the 1919 nationalist revolution. 'Sugar Street', the third book, begins in 1935 with Mustafa al-Nahhas, Zaghul's successor, addressing a Wafd (delegation) conference and ends with the arrest of political activists in 1944.

In *Facing Mount Kenya* Kenyatta (1938:21) elaborates on the value of land to the Kenyan people and mentions that land tenure is "the most important factor in the social, political, religious, and economic life of the tribe". Hence the birth of political parties such as KCA (Kikuyu Central Association), a party that as Ochieng' (1985:102) states, "focused mainly on land and political rights" and the subsequent underground Mau Mau movement. The Mau Mau was crushed in 1956 with the arrest of Dedan Kimathi, the leader. Because of the continued struggle by the people, Britain decided to grant independence to Kenya in 1963.

Finally, while it is acknowledged that much research has been conducted on myth, not everything has been explored. The present study, however, strives to make a contribution to a larger body of knowledge on myth. Myth is like a story without an ending. As life constantly changes new myths come into existence, suggesting the need for fresh investigation.

CHAPTER 2: Naguib Mahfouz

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will focus on Mahfouz's two novels, namely *The Cairo Trilogy*, and *The Children of the Alley* (alternative title, *Children of Gebelawi*). *The Cairo Trilogy* relates the history of the patriarch al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad and his family and relates the lives of three generations. It is divided into three books, *Palace Walk*, *Palace of Desire* and *Sugar Street*. *Palace Walk* is set in Cairo, covers the time between 1917 and ends with the Egyptian revolution of 1919. *Palace of Desire* starts almost five years later in 1924 with negotiations pertaining to Egyptian suzerainty between Sa'd Zaghlul, (1850–1927), an Egyptian nationalist leader and founder of the Wafd party who suffers both arrest (1882) and exile (1919) for his attempts to end foreign domination in Egypt, and the British government, and ends with his death in 1927. *Sugar Street* starts in 1935, eight years after Zaghlul's death, and ends with the arrests of political activists belonging to the Muslim Brothers and Marxism. Though the novel does not necessarily deal with history, there are moments when history and story merge and become inseparable. Likewise, information pertaining to the missing years after the first and the second book will be explained in order to bring about a coherent interpretation.

2.1.1 Background to the Egyptian Liberation myth

When the British troops occupied Egypt in 1882 this gave rise to the formation of a nationalist movement in the country to try and counter the occupation. It should also be remembered that the Egyptians had suffered several setbacks since the British became interested in Egypt during the 1800s. For instance, in 1881 and 1882, Ahmad Urabi (1839-1911), an Egyptian nationalist who led a social-political movement that expressed the discontent of the Egyptian educated classes, army officials, and peasantry with foreign control, staged uprisings in an attempt to make Egypt independent from Britain. His forces were defeated in September 1882 at the battle of Tel al-Kabir. When *The Cairo Trilogy* thus opens Egypt is already a British protectorate, meaning that it (Egypt) has partial control over its (Egypt's) foreign and

domestic affairs, an issue they cannot accept without resistance. *Encarta Encyclopedia* (2006) elucidates the term “protectorate” in international law, as

a relationship between two states in which the stronger state guarantees to protect the weaker one from external aggression or internal disturbance in return for full or partial control over its foreign and domestic affairs. This relationship is established by a treaty between the states concerned; usually the extent and character of the protectorate are outlined in the treaty. No matter how great the right of interference – and in some cases it may be tantamount to virtual control – the protected state retains its nominal sovereignty, thus differing from a colony or a mandated territory.

Due to this *status quo* the Egyptians were like foreigners in their own land since they were not free to take decisions about their own affairs. Fahmy, one of al-Sayyid's sons who is studying law, well captures the agony felt by the Egyptian people about the occupation of their land by the British, as he tells his mother Amina, “But they're occupying our country, a people ruled by foreigners has no life” (Mahfouz, 1957:374). Fahmy clearly understands that once a nation is controlled and managed by another, that nation is politically, socio-economically, educationally, and culturally defunct. In actual fact, the protectorate hardly advantaged any Egyptian. Instead, it “wounded the feelings of the Egyptian people and increased their hostility towards the British” (Zayid, 1965:74). Matti (1994:185) also asserts that Mahfouz “shows the British presence in Egypt as not only a denigration of national dignity but as a source of humiliation to the people”. This is evinced by the atrocities carried out against the Egyptians. For instance, Egyptians are denied access to places in their own country or they face the brutality of the soldiers. Most roads are barricaded when the citizens need to use them. Even in joyous moments they dare not raise their voices above a chuckle for fear of being jailed. For instance, at a party in which the Sultana Zubayda welcomes al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad as her new suitor, one man cautions the group, “Lower your voices or the English will throw us in jail for the night” (Mahfouz, 1957:111). The British soldiers force high-standing Egyptians to do menial and degrading jobs. For instance, one night as al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad sneaks out of Umm Maryam's house at midnight, he is intercepted by a British soldier who takes al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad to a nearby building where he joins many people from all walks of life to fill a hamper with dirt and carry it to fill the trench in the

yard. Commenting about the British soldiers' treatment of the Egyptians, Zayid (1965:75) writes:

The years of the war did not help improve Anglo-Egyptian relations. Members of the National Party were persecuted. Many of them were arrested and some were sent into exile. So heavy was the hand of military authority and so long the arm of the secret service, that prisons were soon full of political suspects.

As a result of this claim, it was thus fundamental for the Egyptians to seek ways of liberating themselves from the British.

British interest in Egypt emanated from a concern to protect the route to India. Consequently, when the Suez Canal was opened in 1869 it increased Egypt's strategic importance, resulting in the British occupation of Egypt in 1882. An internet article, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History-of-morden-Egypt>, adds that another reason for the invasion was to "restore political stability to Egypt under a government of the Khedive and international controls which were in place to streamline Egyptian financing since 1876". The Khedive referred to was Abbas Hilmi 11 (1874–1944), who reigned from 1892 to 1914. Nominally he ruled in subordination to the Ottoman Empire, but in fact Egypt was controlled by the British resident Lord Cromer, and later Lord Kitchener respectively. Although he resisted complete British rule, Abbas met with little success; in 1899 he was forced to admit the British claim to rule jointly with Egypt over Sudan. When Turkey joined the Central Powers in World War I, Britain declared Egypt a British protectorate and deposed Abbas. He lived thereafter in Switzerland, where he died.

When the Ottoman Empire made an alliance with Germany in 1914, this posed a threat to the British empire, compelling the latter to declare Egypt its protectorate, "in order to prevent the country from joining (as Turkey did) the side of the Central Powers in the war" (<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,880574,00.html>).

As a British protectorate, Zayid (1965:72) mentions that Britain assumed as one of its principal functions the suzerainty over Egypt, that, "the rights over Egypt, whether of the Sultan or the Khedive, are forfeit to His Majesty". For instance, when the Khedive

Abbas Hilmi 11, who was by then visiting Constantinople, decided to go back to Egypt, the British government prevented his return, as he was alleged to be pro-Germany as well as pro-Turkey, while “vehemently anti-British” (Matti,1994:176). The Egyptians could no longer decide on the leadership of their country without British interference. In turn the Egyptians considered this as usurpation of their powers, and an insult to their kingdom. In *The Cairo Trilogy*, though Amina has very little knowledge about the world outside her house, she longs for the Khedive’s return, an indication that she is unhappy with the British occupation of Egypt.

The deposed Khedive Abbas Hilmi 11 was succeeded by rulers who pressurized Britain for independence. For instance, Prince Husain Kamil, the sultan, was dissatisfied with the British occupation and he perpetually “demanded definite assurances of future autonomy and self-government before [he] would agree to co-operate in accepting British suzerainty” (Ufford, 1977:24-25). He continuously demanded for the creation of Egyptian coinage and flag since these are generally seen as an assurance of Egyptian right of self-governance. A country’s pride is defined by its own currency and flag, not those of another country. The prince’s efforts evinced the Egyptian dream to be free from the British government. Prince Husain Kamil was succeeded by Prince Kamal al-Din Husayn but the latter “refused to ascend the throne of his late father so long as the British were in charge” (Mahfouz, 1957:16). The fact that Prince Kamal al-Din Husayn refused the offer is indicative of his realization that he would be without any substantial authority as he would be used as a British pawn, meaning that he would not be representing the ideals and the identity of his country but those of the British. Another indication of the Egyptian unhappiness about the British presence in Egypt which was an indication for their yearning for freedom.

2.1.2 The Egyptian myth

Towards the end of *The Cairo Trilogy* one of the emerging new political parties is The Muslim Brotherhood. The American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise (2007:1) in an internet article titled “The Muslim Brotherhood”, mentions that the organization’s motto is, “Allah is our objective. The Prophet is our leader. Qur’an is our law, Jihad is our way. Dying in the way of Allah is our highest hope.” Jihad is generally understood

to be referring to war on behalf of Islam. Within Islamic jurisprudence Jihad is the only form of warfare permissible under Islamic law, and may be declared against apostates, rebels, highway robbers, violent groups, unIslamic leaders or military exertion against non-Muslim combatants but there are other ways to perform jihad as well including civil disobedience. In the languages of non-Islamic cultures, the term is usually used to refer to Muslim 'Holy War' or any violent strife invoking Allah.

One can safely mention that suicide bombings among Muslim societies are still rife even today, and some of them are committed under the auspices of Jihad. With this in mind, one is not surprised to see the youth in the *Trilogy* sacrificing their lives for the principles and ideals of the Egyptian people. As Fahmy meditates over his involvement in the revolution, he resolves that:

It's all the same whether I live or die. Faith is stronger than death, and death is nobler than ignominy. Let's enjoy the hope, compared to which life seems unimportant. Welcome to this new morning of freedom. May God carry out whatever He has decreed (Mahfouz, 1957:387).

At last Fahmy overcomes the fear of death by clinging to the hope that those who die in Jihad are guaranteed to go to heaven. This is confirmed by an internet article, <http://members.chello.nl/a.whichmann2/islam.htmlwhichquotesHadithvol:35>, which maintains that:

The person who participates in Jihad in Allah's cause and nothing compels him to do so except belief in Allah and His apostle, will be recompensed by Allah either with a reward or booty, or will be admitted to paradise (if he is killed).

Hence, when Fahmy is later confronted by his father about his involvement in the revolution he tells him, "What is my life worth? ... What is the life of any man worth?" (Mahfouz, 1957:455). Fahmy is actually convinced that the participation in the revolution for the liberation of Egypt is in the service of Allah.

2.2 The Wafd Delegation and the Myth of Liberation

After the victory of the English over the Germans and the Ottoman Empire, a delegation of the Nationalist leaders, namely, Sa'd Zaghlul Pasha, Abd al-Aziz

Fahmy Bey and Ali Sha'rawi Pasha went to the British High Commissioner, Sir Reginald Wingate, to request him to lift the British protectorate over Egypt and declare independence. In fact, the three leaders were not acting on the spur of the moment, because "allied promises that former Ottoman territories would be allowed self-determination [had] laid hopes in Egypt of independence once the war was over" (Zayid, 1965:71). This granted, the time had come for the Egyptians to demand independence from the British who had been their colonizers. They clung to the myth that they were capable of governing themselves and did not want to continue to be governed by another country.

Though demanding independence, the Egyptians were willing to co-operate with Britain with regard to the supervision of the Suez Canal, the main cause for British interest in Egypt, as well as the management of public debt. Zaghlul and his colleagues thought the proposal would be conciliatory enough for the British to accede to their demand. Even so, the British merely refused the demand, questioning where Zaghlul got the mandate from to act like that. And to prove that he enjoyed wide popular support, Zaghlul drew up a petition to secure the Egyptians' signatures. Mahfouz (1957:353) further informs the readers that the delegation soon became famous:

They had been welcomed into everyone's heart, arousing deep, suppressed desires. Their encouraging impact was like that of a new cure on a patient with an old malady that has resisted treatment, even though he is trying the medicine for the first time.

The presence of the British soldiers in Egypt is compared to an old septic wound on one's body that gives off a sickening smell. This wound has resisted all known medication. Zaghlul's undertaking was therefore like a newly discovered medicine long awaited by the patient. This undertaking inspired the Egyptians and they were filled with profound hope and a dream for liberation, hence the excitement stirred by news of Zaghlul's visit to the high Commissioner as reported by Mahfouz (1957:351):

But the man's soul, those of the people connected to him, and perhaps those of everyone else too, had been exposed to a powerful wave of excitement almost making them lose control of themselves ... their hearts all beating with the same emotion.

The scene portrayed here is of people overjoyed by the hope of gaining autonomy. They are tired of British rule and want to experience the pleasure of being free, being able to take decisions about themselves and about their country without the British deciding what would be best for them. As a result, when al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad signs the petition, he does it “with a delighted gleam in his eyes adding sarcastically that doing so makes him feel as he did after imbibing the eighth glass while lying between Zubayda’s legs” (Mahfouz, 1957:353). Nonetheless, it is apparent that as long as al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad can enjoy his own pleasures, he does not care whether the British stay or leave. It should, therefore, be noted that al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad’s patriotism is limited to an emotional and psychic participation. He wants to devote his whole life to his family, business, and especially his nocturnal amusements with his friends.

However, the people’s joy is short-lived when the Delegation’s demand is spurned. The Delegation is thus forced to request permission to travel to London because they believe in themselves and that they are doing the right thing for their own country. Their demand is again rejected for the obvious reason that “the British government would exert itself to the utmost to prevent this washing of imperial linen in Paris” (Ufford, 1977:75). Notwithstanding, Zaghlul addresses an appeal to President Wilson asking for his help to allow the Egyptian Delegation to attend the Peace Conference in Paris, but this also fails. This rebuff leads to the resignation of Husayn Rushdi Pasha, the then Prime Minister, who finds it unpalatable to negotiate with the British. However, it is also possible that he fears that his own people might label him a British collaborator. Nonetheless, Zaghlul’s efforts are indicative of the Egyptian myth of liberation.

2.3 The 1919 Revolution and the Myth of Liberation

2.3.1 Causes of the 1919 Egyptian revolution

Owing to Husayn Rushdi Pasha’s aforementioned resignation, Zayid (1965:84) reports that Zaghlul “was then determined to allow no Egyptian to form a new cabinet”. This was a way to frustrate the British government and to force it to let go of the Egyptians. Unfortunately, this led to Zaghlul and his colleagues, namely, Hamd

al-Basil, Ismail Sdq and Muhammad Mahmud being arrested and exiled to the island of Malta, a horrible practice by the colonisers to frustrate the plans of the colonised nation. However, news of Zaghlul's arrest sparked off national demonstrations which caused the 1919 Egyptian revolution. Interestingly, Zayid (1965:85) mentions that "Zaghlul, since the beginning of the year, had wishfully hoped to be arrested so that the people would be aroused to action". Zaghlul had envisaged that negotiations without visible participation by the masses would not shake the British government.

Zaghlul's arrest affected the citizens in different ways. To some it caused despondency as is evinced by their comments when reviewing the state of affairs, "will today's hopes be for naught like those of yesterday?" (Mahfouz, 1957:377). To these Egyptians, Sa'd Zaghlul's arrest is reminiscent of the past disappointments already alluded to. Hence, out of frustration they ask, "If Sa'd did not return, what would become of these vast hopes ... but isn't there any way the information might be a false rumor?" (Mahfouz, 1957:377). It is apparent that they are shocked to learn of Zaghlul's arrest. They had put their dreams and hopes of liberation on him, as again made explicit by the following reflective questions and comments:

"The English have imprisoned him Who is there to stand up to the English?"

"He was a man unlike other men. He inspired our lives for a dazzling moment and vanished" (Mahfouz, 1957:377).

Zaghlul's arrest was thus regarded as a disaster to the Egyptians who saw him as their liberator, someone to bring political and social changes to the country, a freedom fighter *par excellence*. With Zaghlul's arrest the myth of liberation is shattered and the nation mourns.

2.3.2 The role played by the youth in the liberation myth

As soon as the news about Sa'd Zaghlul, Abd al-Aziz Fahmy Bey and Ali Sha'rawi Pasha's visit to the British High Commissioner to ask for Egypt's independence reaches the students, interest in the liberation of their country is heightened. It is mostly through Fahmy, al Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad's son, that the youth's involvement is noticed. For instance, when he is at home, and Yasin, his half brother,

expresses his doubts about Zaghlul's attempts, Fahmy replies with enthusiasm, "So long as there's life there's hope, brother" (Mahfouz, 1957:346). It is this hope that makes him visualise an ideal world of his own, "Talk of national liberation excited great dreams in him. In that magical universe he could visualize a new world, a new nation, a new home, a new people. Everyone would be astir with vitality and enthusiasm" (Mahfouz, 1957:349). This is a new world in which everyone is euphoric and content. Here life is full and passionate. It is a world almost too romantic and idyllic to be read. Obviously, Fahmy's aspirations and desires are representative of the majority of the Egyptian people who are yearning for this idyllic world.

Just as the youth are delighted to learn about Zaghlul's visit to the High Commissioner, they are equally annoyed and disappointed when he and his colleagues are arrested and exiled to Malta. Their tempers run high and they are irritable because their dream for an independent Egypt seems to be threatened. For instance, Fahmy, who is known for his patriotic and nationalistic spirit, during the gloomy coffee hour at home, "launched into a long revolutionary speech with tears in his eyes" (Mahfouz, 1957:379). The tears reveal his shock and despair at Zaghlul's arrest, as well as anger against the British government for arresting the beloved leader who is paving the way to independence. Fahmy's revolutionary speech not only expresses the youth's fury and rebelliousness, but also their willingness to take action against the enemy. It is not surprising that, a few lines later, Fahmy claims, "If we don't confront terrorism with the anger it deserves, may the nation never live again. It is unthinkable for the nation to be at peace when its leader who has sacrificed himself for it suffers the torments of captivity" (Mahfouz, 1957:379). Fahmy is outrageous because he sees Zaghlul's arrest as a devastation of their hopes for the liberation which every Egyptian is yearning for.

The students' anger is literally translated into action following the arrest of Zaghlul. As soon as Fahmy arrives at the school premises the following day, he finds a band of students waving their fists and protesting that if Sa'd is not released to continue with his work, they should also be sent into exile with him and this marks the beginning of a strike which leads to violent clashes with the police. It should rather be clarified that at this stage the youth's strike is aimed at the release of Zaghlul and his colleagues, though it cannot be denied that the strike's ulterior motive is the liberation

of Egypt from British oppression. Hence when the students are told to go back to their classes they refuse and vehemently start shouting slogans such as “Independence!”, “Down with the Protectorate!”, and “Long live Sa’d!”, to depict the Egyptians’ desire for self-determination and further protest, “Our fathers have been imprisoned. We won’t study law in a land where the law is trampled underfoot” (Mahfouz, 1957:384). What the students mean is that as long as Zaghlul and his cronies are still in custody, it is meaningless to study the current legal system which is not respected. They see the protectorate as a gross violation of human rights, and the imprisonment of Zaghlul and others as contempt of the very law they are supposed to study. The Law students eventually leave their campus in a demonstration and head for the Schools of Engineering, Agriculture, Medicine, and Commerce and start demonstrating in the streets.

The strikers and demonstrators do not escape unscathed as groups of mounted policemen commanded by English officers advance towards them, “trailing plumes of dust behind them. The earth shook with their hoof beats” (Mahfouz, 1957:385). The phrases “plumes of dust” and “earth shook” suggest a great number of horses at full speed. This suggests the decisiveness and urgency with which the police act. Many students, especially those who confront the police defiantly and those at the head of the demonstration are arrested. On subsequent days all the schools in Egypt stop functioning and the scholars join the demonstrations, an indication of their determination to see their country liberated. It is unfortunate that students’ lives are sacrificed as the police use live ammunition on them.

It is significant to note that Fahmy’s wish is to die a martyr’s death. The *World Book Dictionary* describes a martyr as “a person who is put to death or made to suffer greatly because of his religion or other beliefs, or a person who chooses to die or suffer rather than renounce his faith or principles”. This granted, the Egyptians who die during the demonstrations are viewed as martyrs for refusing British authority. While in sorrowful solitude Fahmy wishes that “he had been one of the departed or at least one of those who had held their ground” (Mahfouz, 1957:386). Hence, with a full swing he “threw himself totally into all of this (the demonstrations, chants, bullets). Driven by his enthusiasm, he reached far-flung horizons of lofty sentiment. He was troubled that he was still alive and regretted his escape” (Mahfouz, 1957:386).

Fahmy demonstrates the daring, the willingness and the determination the youth depict in the struggle to liberate their country. He is not only willing, but also ready to fight for his ideals, and for this to happen he throws himself in the line of fire even if others are retreating, demonstrating that death is nothing compared to the freedom of his country. The phrase “lofty sentiment” suggests exalted, noble feelings. Fahmy believes that if he dies during this time, he would die an honourable death as he will be rendering service to his people, and such a death will always be associated with the liberation of the country. Once people realise the importance of the liberating myth they are more than willing to sacrifice their lives. Fahmy eventually dies by a stray bullet during a peaceful demonstration, which still makes him a martyr as his death is regarded as a sacrifice for his country.

Besides participating in the nation-wide demonstrations, another important activity the youth are involved in is the secret distribution of handbills to update the citizens about new developments and whatever information is deemed necessary to reach the people. This is evident immediately the Wafd Delegation is prevented from making their journey to the Peace Conference in Paris and the Sultan Ahmad Fuad accepts Husayn Rushdi Pasha’s resignation as Prime Minister. Zaghlul and his colleagues write a letter to Fuad to caution him about his ill-informed decisions as well as their possible results about Egypt’s liberation from the British. Copies of this letter are given to the youth for distribution to the relevant structures. Fahmy is also in possession of a copy of this letter. He proudly informs Yasin that, “I’m not just keeping it. I’m distributing it as much as I can” (Mahfouz, 1957:373). Fahmy, like most youth, is proud that he is making a positive contribution for the liberation of his native country. Astonished by Fahmy’s involvement in the political activities, Amina yells, “I can scarcely believe my ears. How can you expose yourself to danger when you’re such an intelligent person?” (Mahfouz, 1957:373). Although Amina raises fearful concerns about Fahmy’s involvement in the struggle for liberation, the latter cannot be dissuaded from this commitment. Actually, he considers talking to his mother about these political issues, a cumbersome job, to a point that Mahfouz mentions, Fahmy “was closer to the heavens than he was to convincing her that he had a duty to expose himself to danger for the sake of the nation” (Mahfouz, 1957:373).

Fahmy's ardent commitment is made more explicit on the afternoon he becomes instrumental in saving his elder brother Yasin who is wrongly suspected by worshippers of being a spy for the English. On arrival home, his father, al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad, summons Fahmy to find out what his involvement is in the committee and to dissuade him from being involved in the struggle. Fahmy tries to justify his actions by saying that God urges the believers to engage in the *jihad*. When his father objects that God means the *jihad* is the struggle for his holy cause, Fahmy answers that fighting for sovereignty and fighting for God are one and the same thing. After al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad has asked him to abandon the struggle, Fahmy finds himself in a dilemma because he is committed to the cause of the struggle and cannot retreat from it, yet he also loves his father and does not want to displease him. He has to choose between obeying his father and fulfilling his duties as a patriotic citizen. Matti (1994:184) asserts that for Fahmy, "to join the revolution is noble, but to disobey his father is disgraceful". Consequently, Fahmy decides to lie to his father that he will give up his role in the struggle while in reality he plans to continue rendering his service to the revolution. As El-Enany (1994:73-74) notes, "the inevitable convergence of public and private reaches its tragic conclusion". Unexpectedly, al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad, wanting some assurance, asks Fahmy to swear on the Qur'an, and he responds thus:

"Forgive me, Papa. I'll obey every command of yours more than willingly, but I can't do this. I can't. We work like a single hand. I can't accept shrinking back and abandoning my brothers; and I don't think you would like me to. There is no way that life would be bearable if I did. There's no danger in what we're doing. Others have more exalted tasks like participating in the demonstrations in which many of them have been martyred. I'm no better than those who have been killed. There are funeral processions for tens of martyrs at a time with no lamentation except for the nation. Even the families of the victims shout slogans instead of weeping. What is my life worth? ... What is the life of any man worth?" (Mahfouz, 1957:455).

Before Zaghlul is arrested, he creates an underground organization called the Secret Organization. Zaghlul "appointed Abd al-Rahman Fahmi, a man with a vast experience in military and civil service" (Zayid, 1965:85), to co-ordinate its activities. Under Fahmy's direction, the Secret Organization appoints several committees responsible for reporting the activities of the high commissioner and government

officials. Zayid (1965:86) reports that the organization is also responsible for “obtaining weapons and bombs for the terrorization and assassination of enemies”. Seemingly, Fahmy is secretly serving this organization in one of its various committees. In the foregoing passage it is clear that, while Fahmy respects his father, freedom for the Egyptian people is primary and urgent. If he withdraws from the organization as his father has asked him to do, he would do his country a disservice and, therefore, he would not consider himself a man. Fahmy feels that he is serving his country in the noblest manner, and his life is nothing compared to the liberation of his people, hence the rhetorical questions, “What is my life worth? ... what is the life of any man worth?” Fahmy has no problem in sacrificing his life because to him the liberation myth is so important. As witnessed during the demonstration, Fahmy would throw himself at the firing line to prove that one’s life is not worth the ideals of liberation. In actual fact, his interpretation is that there is no life without liberation.

2.3.3 Egyptian reaction to the British declaration of martial law

On account of the strikes and demonstrations the British government is left with no option but to declare martial law to suppress the Egyptians, another ploy used by the colonizers to foil the designs of the colonized people. Given that the country is characterized by insurrection and public calamity, the British soldiers also act in the extreme. The following is an extract of some of the atrocities carried out by the British soldiers on the Egyptian civilians. Shykh Mutawalli makes this report about what happens to al-Aziziya and Bedrashin villages:

They set fire to the villages; pouring gasoline over the poles and thatch forming the roofs of the houses. The towns awoke in dreadful terror. Residents fled from their homes, screaming and wailing as though they had gone mad. The tongues of flames reached everywhere until both villages were engulfed. The soldiers formed a ring around the burning villages to wait for the wretched inhabitants, who rushed off in every direction followed by their livestock and dogs and cats, looking for some way to escape. When they reached the soldiers, the latter fell upon the men, beating and kicking them. Then they detained the women to strip them of their jewellery and divest them of their honour. Any woman who resisted was killed. Any husband, father, or brother who lifted a hand to protect them was gunned down ... they led the survivors to a nearby camp, where they forced them to sign a

document containing their confessions to the crimes they had not committed and their admission that what the English had done to them was an appropriate punishment (Mahfouz, 1957:502).

This scene portrays the merciless actions of the British soldiers critically aimed at the total destruction of a whole nation just for the control of the Suez Canal. The *Encarta Encyclopaedia* states that:

Once the state of war is actually established, the courts cannot question military acts ... it is customary whenever martial law or some variant of it has been applied, as in wartime, to pass an Act of Indemnity to protect any officer from legal attacks on their conduct during the period of martial law.

The British soldiers know that they are protected by law in case they commit any violent activities and subsequently take advantage of it. The screaming and wailing of the innocent civilians confirm the predicament caused by the destruction as the wretched people are stripped of their families, relatives and property. There is nothing more shameful than stripping a woman naked in public. What makes the scene even more awful is that the English are doing this to defenseless civilians in order to discipline them.

Nevertheless, the Egyptians ignore all these punitive measures, which are characterized by “the massacres, the martyrs, the nationalist funerals with tens of coffins at a time” (Mahfouz, 1957:400). The people do not become dispirited or lose focus of their objective which is to obtain their sovereignty. Instead, these massacres and martyrs unite and invigorate them to their common course as they claim, “This innocent blood screams out to continue the struggle” (Mahfouz, 1957:395). Mahfouz portrays the Egyptian citizens as more than willing to sacrifice their lives for freedom as explicitly depicted by Fahmy’s remarks:

Let them kill as many as their savagery dictates. Death only invigorates us ... I wouldn’t have thought our people had this kind of fighting spirit ... the nation’s filled with a spirit of eternal struggle flaming throughout its body stretched from Aswan to the Mediterranean Sea. The English only stirred it up. It is blazing away now and will never die out (Mahfouz, 1957:401).

While Fahmy sees the English as heartless, he is nevertheless encouraged by the invincible resoluteness the Egyptians are displaying. The unity and collaboration he sees amongst the people in achieving their goal compel him to compare them to one body of a being with different parts but all working for a common course. Hyperbolically the body stretches over hundreds of kilometers from the Aswan Dam to the Mediterranean Sea, suggesting that it is the entire Egyptian nation involved in the struggle for liberation. The movements made by this huge body are compared to a raging fire, suggesting danger and destruction. The fact that he describes the struggle as eternal suggests that the Egyptians are resolute to sacrifice their lives and fight in order to be free. This only means fighting with a united spirit of endurance to win the struggle and obtain their freedom. Once more, this is a demonstration that the liberating myth is so important that people are more than willing to sacrifice their lives.

2.3.4 Zaghlul's release and the visit to the Peace Conference

As the revolution continues, the replacement of Wingate by General Allenby brings about some visible changes to Egypt's political life. The new High Commissioner decides to release Sa'd Zaghlul Pasha, which arouses in the whole of Egypt frantic jubilation. To the Egyptians, Zaghlul's release is a sign of victory over the English. To them it also means imminent independence. Upon his release Zaghlul and his colleagues proceed to Paris to air the nation's demand for independence before the Peace Conference. The Egyptian exultation is, however, ephemeral because on their arrival in Paris, "they were not only denied a hearing, but were also shocked by President Wilson's recognition of the Protectorate" (Zayid:1965:88). As Zaghlul in *The Cairo Trilogy* avers, "we were invited here to commit suicide" (Mahfouz, 1957:698). They are disenchanted as they have not expected this bitter welcome by the Peace Conference. They have been expecting the Peace Conference to support them in their demand and declare independence to Egypt. Nonetheless, Zaghlul and his friends, though disappointed, do not give up hope to complete their mission. They still believe there are other avenues to be explored to persuade the international community to listen to their demand. Consequently, Zaghlul and his colleagues, "decided to continue their struggle in and outside Egypt. In Europe Zaghlul continued

his course for Egypt among the representatives at the Peace Conference as well as among influential writers and politicians in America (Zayid, 1965:89).

When Zaghlul lobbies for support from influential authors, he understands very well that literature can be a powerful tool for exposing wickedness as well as making use of different literary genre to express the wishes of a people. The messages that are spread by books in their different genres such as poetry, drama and prose do reach very far and can help to bring about significant changes to any given situation. Meanwhile, the Egyptian support for the Wafd's course is outstanding as reported by Kamal: "The people's support for him is great enough to achieve our goals in the end" (Mahfouz, 1957:701).

2.3.5 Other attempts in pursuit of the Egyptian liberation myth

When the Peace Conference denied the Wafd Delegation a hearing, Zaghlul and Lord Milner, a German-born British statesman and colonial administrator, whose last great public service was, after serious rioting broke out, a mission to Egypt from December, 1919 to March, 1920 to make recommendations on British-Egyptian relations, specifically on how to reconcile the British protectorate established in 1915 with Zaghlul Pasha's calls for self-government, began with negotiations which were aborted towards the end of 1920. Throughout these negotiations Zaghlul's major demands were "the abolition of the Protectorate; the realization of Egypt's external and internal independence, and the abolition of martial law and censorship over the Press" (Zayid, 1965:101). The Milner-Zaghlul's negotiations were succeeded by Adli Pasha, an Egyptian political figure, and Lord Curzon's, British foreign secretary from 1919 to 1924, without success either as they were also suspended by November 1921 on the allegation that Zaghlul was a trouble-maker and a rubble-rouser. Consequently, the British High Commissioner, Lord Allenby, requested Zaghlul to abandon all political activities. When the latter protested, he was arrested and exiled to the Seychelles. Zayid (1965:107) reports that Zaghlul's arrest sparked off further "strikes, demonstrations and general chaos" throughout Egypt. Prior to Zaghlul's arrest, Adli Pasha resigned from the post of Prime Minister to be replaced by Tharwat Pasha. One notices that the Egyptian leadership was in grim disillusionment as a result of the colonisers' obstinacy. Although Tharwat was also a moderate like

Adli Pasha, on assuming his duties as Prime Minister, he insisted on the following terms stated by Zayid (1965:105):

- that the British terminated the Protectorate and recognized Egypt as an independent sovereign state;
- that Egypt be permitted a constitution; and
- that the Egyptian Foreign Ministry be re-established.

Tharwat's vision was also to see Egypt politically free from British claws and to manage her own affairs. Although Zayid notes that Tharwat did not demand an immediate abolition of the Protectorate as well as an appointment of a different official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, what is important here is the vision that he had for Egypt. Of course the difference between him and Zaghlul was that the latter wanted everything British to come to a standstill while Egypt took over its own affairs without British interference.

2.4. The 1922 Declaration and the Egyptian Reaction

On 22 February 1922 Lord Allenby issued a Unilateral Declaration announcing, "the termination of the Protectorate, the independence of Egypt, and the abolition of martial law" (Zayid, 1965:107). The reader might be tempted to believe that at long last Egypt had become independent from the British, and, therefore, the Egyptians had reason to rejoice. However, this was not so. Commenting on the Unilateral Declaration, Mahfouz (1957:809) asserts, "The conquered Egyptian nation as a whole had proudly rejected that declaration, but *nominal* sovereignty had been thrust upon it, with the inevitable consequences."

The declaration was rejected because it had not been a negotiated declaration in which both parties had been involved. Besides, the declaration did not satisfy the aspirations of the Egyptians as it was given with reservations left to the discretion of the British High Commissioner, which were unsavory to the Egyptians. In reality, Egypt was not yet independent in spite of the Declaration. Metz (1990:3) in an internet article titled "Egypt under the Protectorate and the 1919 Revolution," mentions the following reservations:

- The security of the communications of the British Empire in Egypt;
- The defense of Egypt against all foreign aggression or interference, direct and indirect;
- The protection of foreign interests in Egypt and the protection of minorities;
- The Sudan.

The reservations undoubtedly touched on every aspect of Egyptian life as Britain could interfere with Egyptian policies at any given time. The reservations also reveal that the British were gripped by the myth of them being the only ones capable of good governance and that the Egyptians were unskilled and, therefore, incapable of running the affairs of their country. Even now, western countries do not believe that African countries can govern themselves. African governments are believed to be chaotic and always rigged with civil wars. But this is just a myth as there are African countries that have demonstrated good governance and order. The European myth is also accompanied by an ulterior motive of defrauding the colonized countries of their resources. As a result, the Egyptians felt they were not free if Britain had the right to meddle with their affairs. They, therefore, repudiated the declaration for the obvious reason that they wanted complete emancipation from Britain, not freedom that was incomplete. Tharwat, who was Prime Minister when the Declaration was issued, helped to form a third political party in Egypt, namely, the Liberal Constitutional Party, which was led by the former Prime Minister, Idli Pasha. Its aim was to achieve independence for Egypt. Another significant step undertaken by Tharwat was the formation of a Cabinet, which although unpopular to the Egyptian people who espoused Zaghlul, it promulgated a law concerning the retirement of foreign officials serving the Egyptian government. The Cabinet was, at least, trying to get the British officials out of the country, making way for the Egyptian officials to occupy those posts and demonstrate that they were capable of self-governance. As Zayid (1965:114) puts it, "all permanent European officials in Egypt were allowed to retire on April 1, 1924, or to continue provisionally until April 1, 1927". This was a considerable step although the Egyptians were still stuck with the four reservations mentioned earlier in the study.

2.5 Zaghlul's release and his efforts to liberate Egypt

Zaghlul, who had been moved from the Seychelles to Gibraltar, was released by the British government in March 1923, and "a wave of optimism and joy swept over Egypt" (Ziyad, 1965:116). This excitement was a signal of the support and confidence the nation had for Zaghlul. They believed that he represented their ideals and their aspirations to be absolutely free from the British. They wanted visible and radical changes that would make them see the British evacuated immediately. Zaghlul was consequently elected Prime Minister in January 1924. As Prime Minister he had a difficult task ahead of him, that of negotiating the four reservations with Britain which saw concessions regarding the Sudan, security of the minorities and protection of the Suez Canal out of question. On the other hand, Zaghlul was not prepared to entertain any negotiations with Britain about the Sudan which the Egyptians could not separate from Egypt. On either side the issue of compromise was lacking. What Zaghlul demanded from Britain was an absolute autonomous Egypt free from British interference. Hence when the two nations enter into the negotiations which are later suspended, Zayid (1965:120) mentions that, Zaghlul:

demanded the withdrawal of the British troops from Egypt, the withdrawal of the Judicial and Financial Advisors, non-interference by Britain in Egypt's foreign policy, and the withdrawal of the British claim to protect the foreigners in Egypt and the Suez Canal. [He] also insisted on the unity of Egypt and the Sudan.

Since the British could not compromise on Zaghlul's demands, the negotiations were bound to fail, which was a setback to the Egyptians. However, as Marlowe (n.d) in an internet article titled *Zaghlul, Sa'd*, mentions, Zaghlul resigned in November 1924, after "numerous British officials and Egyptian collaborationists were murdered by extremists [and] after the receipt of what amounted to an ultimatum from Allenby". In essence, Zaghlul's demands are repudiated as retaliation for the murder of the British officials. Zaghlul temporarily disappears from the political arena having failed to achieve the major objective of gaining freedom from the British lords.

When Zaghlul re-appeared, he formed a coalition with his opposition party, the Liberal Constitutional Party. His reappearance was fueled by the desire, the myth to seek ways to free Egypt from Britain. Zaghlul felt he would not have done his country

any good service if he neglected this important political issue that was like a thorn in the eye. Possibly the coalition was an attempt to unify the people and make the parties have a collective goal because if they continued to fight the British being divided, they would not become a strong force. Kamal utters his concern about this coalition, “After the coalition between the political parties, is there really any hope of getting the constitution reinstated and reviving parliamentary government?” (Mahfouz, 1957:864).

Kamal, like any Egyptian, knows that Zaghlul, leader of the Wafd Party, and Adli, leader of the Liberal Constitutional Party, do not see eye to eye. Kamal is worried how they can co-operate under this *status quo*. His wish is to see co-operation between the leaders so that they can speak with one voice and demand absolute sovereignty. The second book of *The Cairo Trilogy*, *Palace of Desire*, ends with Sa’d Zaghlul’s death in August 1927. He, unfortunately, died while Egypt was still far from realizing its myth of liberation. The struggle for independence was, therefore, still to continue.

2.6 The 1936 Egyptian Revolution

As the third book of *The Cairo Trilogy*, *Sugar Street*, starts around 1935, almost eight years after Zaghlul’s death, Mustafa al-Nahhas has already taken over as leader of the Wafd Party. Rizk (2002:4) describes al-Nahhas as a bold leader who in his inaugural address before parliament categorically states his mission:

“I and my colleagues pledge ourselves to undertake the burdens of government and to bear the strains of promoting the cause of our nation in its adversity. In accepting power, we aspire to safeguard the rights of our country and the provisions of its constitution, but our acceptance should not be construed as assenting to any condition or action that conflicts with the independence and sovereignty of our country.”

When al-Nahhas mentions that his government would “bear the strains of promoting the cause of our nation”, he is aware of the Egyptians’ unhappiness on account of not attaining their freedom from the British and he, therefore, assumes the responsibility to spearhead Egypt towards attaining that goal. The speech also predicted a period of anti-British political activity confirmed by the heated sentiments

as expressed by the common Egyptian citizens in *The Cairo Trilogy* in a packed train heading for the *Jihad* festival:

One said, "Commemoration of our past struggle is a struggle in every sense of the word this year. Or it ought to be."

Another observed, "It should provide a response to Foreign Secretary Hoare and his sinister declaration."

Aroused by the reference to the British official, a third shouted, "The son of a bitch said, 'we have advised against the re-enactment of the Constitution of 1923 and 1930'. Why is our constitution any business of his?"

A fourth reminded the crowd, "Don't forget what he said before that: 'When, however, we have been consulted we have advised ...' and so on."

"Yes who asked for his advice?"

"Ask this government of pimps about that" (Mahfouz, 1957:1014).

The conversation was taking place on 13 November 1935, the eighth commemoration of the *Jihad* or Struggle Day. The citizens are apparently full of wrath sparked off by Hoare's statements. It should be remembered that though Britain had made the Unilateral Declaration to free Egypt, it was just in principle because of the four aforementioned reservations. Egypt was, therefore, still struggling to obtain its suzerainty from the British, and Hoare's remark had just opened up the old wounds which reminded them of their oppression. Notwithstanding, the conversation also allows the reader to see that the Egyptians were still united in their myth for liberation as will be demonstrated by the imminent revolution. Rizk (2004:2) quotes Hoare's speech:

It is absolutely not true that we oppose the return of the constitutional life in Egypt in a manner that conforms to that country's needs. We, in accordance with our customs, could not nor would not take such a stance. Therefore, when we were consulted on the issue, we advised against the return to both the 1923 Constitution and that of 1930, as the former proved itself unviable and the latter entirely against the wishes of the people.

The Egyptian citizens found Hoare's ironical statement irksome because he too knew very well that Britain had always looked down upon them and had wanted to serve its interests in Egypt, hence its reluctance to give the latter total liberation. Besides, if Egypt wanted the 1923 and 1930 Constitutions, why was she denied that if she was satisfied with them? The Egyptians were right to call Hoare's declaration "sinister"

because it harmed their lives while benefiting the British. The citizens in the preceding passage were also indignant about some of their own leaders who behaved like traitors against their own people, hence they labelled them “government pimps”. Obviously such people were collaborating with the British and were, therefore, doing nothing to liberate their own people from the British.

During al-Nahhas’ address the Egyptians are also reminded of some important verses from the Qur’an like (8:56) which state, “Prophet, goad the Believers to fight.” The verse is appropriate to the Egyptians gathered here on account that they are celebrating Jihad Day and the Muslims consider Jihad part and parcel of their lives, their religion, an element that is imbedded in their culture that they cannot live without. As the researcher has already remarked that the liberation myth drives people to sacrifice their lives, the masses are inflamed into action as soon as al-Nahhas concludes with an open call for the use of force and an appeal for a revolution to force the British government to listen to the Egyptian demand for independence. Apparently, as Mahfouz (1957:1017-18) remarks, people have been waiting for this call because:

their shouts and applause rang out in response to it (al-Nahhas’ speech). People stood on the chairs and yelled with wild enthusiasm. The crowd’s excitement reached fever pitch. The passionate outbursts were intense. The chants were ardent and menacing.

In his address, al-Nahhas finds he has no option but to inflame the Egyptians to use force to obtain their long awaited independence. The wrathful reaction of the Egyptians has reached breaking point as elucidated by words and phrases such as “fever pitch”; “yelled”; “wild”; “passionate”; “ardent”; and “menacing”, which express heightened emotions. Mahfouz (1957:1018) further remarks that, “His people were in perpetual need of a revolution to combat the waves of oppression that prevented their rebirth. Periodic revolutions were necessary to serve as a vaccine against this dread disease, for tyranny was the nation’s most deeply entrenched malady.”

Once again the British are metaphorically compared to a fatal disease for which revolution is the only medication. The behaviour of the British is seen as a deep-seated ailment amongst the Egyptians. By this time the British occupation in Egypt

had exceeded fifty years, and this means more than fifty years of anguish to the Egyptians as their attempts to obtain their freedom were wasted.

As the demonstrations start, Mahfouz informs the reader that, “the constables’ bullets rained down on the students ... they shot to kill, showing no mercy. Young boys fell writhing in their own blood” (Mahfouz, 1957:1020). Once more the Egyptian students are seen sacrificing their dear lives for the sake of freedom for their motherland. One citizen even comments, “The victims are always students, the most precious children of the nation, alas” (Mahfouz, 1957:1020).

2.7 The Second Declaration and the Egyptian reaction

The 1935 revolution resulted in the Egyptian political parties uniting to form the United Front in order to resume the negotiations for independence with Britain. These negotiations gave birth to the 1936 second nominal independence. It was nominal in the sense that although Britain had announced the abolition of the four reservations, it was in principle not in practice, implying that the British persisted to hold the opinion or the myth that the Egyptians were children incapable of governing themselves. This meant the Egyptians were still not liberated from their colonizers. Fuad, son of Jami al-Hamzawi, al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad’s shop assistant, who has heard the announcement of Egypt’s second nominal independence and the termination of the four restrictions Britain has announced in the last treaty over the radio, is overjoyed about this treaty as he states:

It (Britain) abolishes the reserved points limiting Egyptian independence, prepares the way for the end of the capitulations granting special privileges to foreigners, limits the future presence of foreign troops and restricts them to a certain region. Without any doubt it is a great step forward (Mahfouz, 1957:1077).

The irony about Fuad’s statement is that he is unaware of the British duplicity behind the treaty making Egypt’s “independence” an illusion or fluid. Although the British troops are to be stationed next to the Canal Zone, and al-Nahhas has expressed “Egypt’s willingness to construct the necessary roads needed to facilitate the movement of the British forces in the event of a sudden threat to Egypt” (Zayid, 1965:166), they never adhere to this agreement. Roberts (2002:2) alleges that:

Despite the frequent use of the term 'Canal Zone', no such single zone was defined. The Treaty simply referred to 'the vicinity of the Canal' and named locations in the vicinity of which the British servicemen were to be stationed. The result was that instead of having distinct Canal Zone borders which could be fortified and defended or at least signposted, there was a series of British Camps with individual perimeters. These were inviolable but between them the sand and the Egyptians could flow freely. This was a charter for terrorists and was eventually treated as such.

As this article proclaims, although Egypt was now considered 'independent' by Britain, it was still not free from British troops which she regarded as undesirable. Britain was still obsessed with the myth that Egypt was incapable of defending herself. Ironically again was that the presence of the British troops in the vicinity of the Canal, "was not to constitute an occupation and would in no way prejudice the sovereign rights of Egypt" (Roberts, 2002:2). The same internet article lists the following points which are part of the Convention on immunities and privileges of British forces in Egypt:

- Immunity from civil or criminal trial by Egyptian courts in respect of acts done as part of their duty.
- British camps to be inviolable through remaining Egyptian territory.
- Freedom of movement between camps and between camps and access points to Egypt.
- Unrestricted rights of communication.
- Right to generate and distribute electricity.
- Right to send messages including telegrams in clear/code/cipher over the Egyptian communication system.
- Right to use Egyptian rail and communications system at rates then in force.

As long as the British forces in Egypt enjoyed these privileges, Egypt still could not enjoy absolute independence as the soldiers were above Egyptian laws or any form of control. British troops had the freedom to do as they wished at any given time and the Egyptian authorities had no powers to restrain them. Moreover, no country can be said to be independent when it cannot boast of its own army to defend its territories. The article further mentions that the term "British force" in the Convention meant the following:

- *Every person* subject to the British Army Act, Air Force Act, Naval Discipline Act and [everybody] attached to His Majesty Forces present in Egypt; plus
- *Every civilian official of British nationality* accompanying or serving with the said forces in Egypt; plus
- *Wives, and children* under 21 years of age of the above persons.

Seemingly, the term British force meant every British person in Egypt irrespective of how they had come there and what they were doing. Such persons were also immune from Egyptian control, making it complicated for the country to boast of the form of independence thrust upon them.

One of the serious issues Fuad mentions concerns the privileges known as Capitulations in Egypt granted to foreigners. Like the British force above, they are immune from prosecution in Egyptian courts. Razik (2005:2) mentions that:

Each nation that was party to the capitulations had its own consular court which tried cases between its own subjects, its own subjects and other subjects of other foreign powers and its own subjects and Egyptians. Because of this and other advantages, many subjects of nations that were not party to the capitulations, strove to obtain subject status of capitulatory powers. The result was judicial chaos and wholesale flouting of the laws.

As a matter of fact, the agreement reached between the two countries about the Suez Canal issue was that the British forces would stay there, “until such time as the High Contracting parties agreed that the Egyptian army was in a position to ensure by its own resources the liberty and entire security of the Canal” (Zayid, 1965:173). Negotiations pertaining the protection of foreigners in Egypt were only held from 12 April to 8 May 1937, and although the interested parties agreed to the abolishment of the system, the Egyptians were to be stuck with it for twelve years which were put aside as an interim period “during which the mixed courts would continue to function and would assume the jurisdiction of the consular courts over criminal and civil suits involving foreigners, as well as over personal status cases for those nations that so wish” (Zayid, 1965:173). Britain was still prejudiced against Egypt’s judicial capacity. In other words, the infidels cannot try their betters, and the British myth is that the Egyptians do not understand European law. As a result of this Egypt cannot be said to have complete independence if she cannot inflict Egyptian laws on foreigners

residing in her country. The struggle for independence was, therefore, far from being over.

2.8 Emergence of New Political Parties

As *Sugar Street* nears its end, two underground political organizations emerge, both aiming at the liberation of the Egyptians from their oppressor as well as from social issues after the failure by the National Party, Wafd Delegation and Liberal Constitutional Party.

The Muslim Brotherhood was founded by Hassan al Banna in 1928. I have already referred to its motto which is central to the Egyptian myth of liberation. Although in its early years it concentrated on religion, education, and social services, Jones (2011:1) in an internet article titled “What is the Muslim Brotherhood?”, asserts that over the years, “it [has] moved into the political sphere, organizing protests against the Egyptian government”. The Muslim Brotherhood is currently the largest opposition party in Egypt even though it is illegal under Egyptian law. Abd al-Muni’m, al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad’s grandson, is the leader of the organization and owing to his commitment to the organization, he is, “more than prepared to place everything he possessed - his industry, money, and intelligence - at the service of the cause” (Mahfouz, 1957:1277). Al-Muni’m is ready to serve the organization with his soul and blood, believing that the organization must win the struggle against the British and liberate the Egyptian people. This commitment is again made evident in the following speech directed at his colleagues:

Let us prepare for a prolonged struggle. Our mission is not to Egypt alone but to all Muslims worldwide. It will not be successful until Egypt and all other Islamic nations have accepted these Qur’anic principles in common. We shall not put our weapons away until the Qur’an has become a constitution for all Believers (Mahfouz, 1957:1278).

While *The Cairo Trilogy* is recounting activities around the 1930s, it is striking to note that the organization continues to reiterate Abd al-Muni’m’s claim today as made apparent by Kessier (2011:1) in an article titled, “Muslim Brotherhood Translation Book”:

Jihad for Allah is not limited to the specific region of the Islamic countries, since the Muslim homeland is one and is not divided, and the banner of Jihad shall continue to be raised until every inch of the land of Islam will be liberated, and the State of Islam established.

It is apparent that the organization is still intent on intensifying Islamic culture by all means, and although it claims it wants a return to the precepts of the Qur'an, it is using both religion and violence to advance its political agenda. It should be remembered that in its broader usage and interpretation, the term jihad has accrued both violent and non-violent meanings. It can imply striving to live a moral and virtuous life, spreading and defending Islam as alluded to by al-Muni'm, as well as fighting injustice and oppression. In fact, Gaffney (2011:2) points out that, "Al Qaeda and the MB have the same objectives, [and that] it is evident from the creed, and from the Brotherhood's history that violence is an inherent part of the MB's tactics, [and concludes that] the MB is the root of the majority of Islamic terrorist groups in the world today." The organization is, therefore, intent on freeing the Egyptian people from the British using the teachings of the Prophet Muhamed which do not denounce violent activities. This is noticeable when Abd al-Muni'm is arrested and interrogated by the police officer:

"How can you, a lawyer, break the laws of the state?"

"I haven't broken any law. We work publicly – writing in the papers and preaching in the mosques. People who spread God's word have nothing to fear."

"Is agitation against allied nations a goal of these meetings?"

"Do you refer to Britain, sir? That deceitful enemy? A state that crushes our honour with its tanks cannot be considered an ally. I realize that Britain is our principal enemy in the world" (Mahfouz, 1957:1301).

The Egyptian nation has been dissatisfied with the British occupation as well as the meaningless declarations that have not done anything to set Egypt free. As an organization, the Muslim Brotherhood is consequently determined to go ahead and make efforts to rid the British from Egyptian rule. When the police officer tries to warn Abd al-Muni'm to leave politics, the response he gets is, "Thank you for your advice, which I shall not follow" (Mahfouz, 1957:1302), meaning that members of the Muslim Brotherhood are prepared to die rather than abandon their mission to free Egypt from British power. Ahmad Shawkat is another of al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad's

grandsons and brother to Abd al-Muni'm. He is a young Marxist journalist for *The New Man* magazine. Marxism is a social and political theory based on the works of Karl Marx and his followers associated with socialist and communist movements. Socialism is defined by the *Encarta Encyclopedia* as "a concept and party-based political movement, originally based in the organized working class, generally antagonistic towards capitalism [whose] final aim was a communist or classless society [and] increasingly concentrated on social reforms within capitalism".

The *Encarta Encyclopaedia* then defines communism as a "term in political science denoting either a society where all property is held in common or a political movement whose final aim is the establishment of such a society". While Fahmy's generation has been limited to the issues of independence and constitutional government, Ahmad has gone a step further to include the issue of social justice as well. Idli Karim, who is the editor in chief of *The New Man* magazine, holds the view that as a political organization, "We want a further stage of development. We desire a school for socialism. Independence is not the ultimate goal. It's a way to obtain the people's constitutional, economic, and human rights" (Mahfouz, 1957:1071). This means that when the country has obtained the said rights, it still has a duty of transforming and refining its social policies for the benefit of everyone. Hence when Karim is in the party's meeting, he tells his colleagues that, "Our primary obligation is not to theorize at length but to raise the proletariat's level of awareness about the historic role they are to play in saving themselves and the world as a whole" (Mahfouz, 1957:1278), a duty that Ahmad and his wife Sawsan have already engaged themselves in. Ahmad gives inspirational talks to labourers in dilapidated buildings and alleys. As a matter of fact, their primary goal is to instill into the working class the recognition of the antagonism that has existed between them and the bourgeoisie. An anonymous internet article (<http://marx.esrver.org/1848-communist-manifesto/cm4.text>) adds that the Communists, "Openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communist revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win."

When Ahmad is arrested, the police officer asks him during the interrogation:

"Are you a Communist?"

“I’m a socialist. Many deputies in parliament support socialism. The law itself does not censure a communist for his ideas, as long as he does not resort to violent means” (Mahfouz, 1957:1302).

It is ironical for Ahmad to assert that he does not resort to violence as he has just told Karim that they give inspirational talks to “rebellious labourers” and has also added that a violent endeavour is an “unavoidable necessity” (Mahfouz, 1957:1279), a statement to which the publisher responds:

A corrupt society will be transformed only by the worker’s hand. When the consciousness of the workers has been filled with the new faith and when people in general share a united will, then neither repressive laws nor cannons will stand in our way.

Workers are actually well organized through a trade union which is an association of workers established to improve their economic and social conditions. A trade union may engage in political activities, including lobbying for legislation and supporting political candidates favourable to labour. Where this is the practice, workers become a tool that has strong influence over government, hence this party relying on them to free Egypt from the British. The use of violence by communists is also confirmed in the internet article (<http://marx.esrver.org/1848-communist.manifesto/cm4.text>) which mentions that “the communists everywhere support every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of things”. Revolutions are usually accompanied by violent clashes with the law. Ahmad also asserts that “the destruction of religion will be possible only after political liberation has been achieved by revolution” (Mahfouz, 1957:1279), meaning that even this party is determined to resort to violence for the liberation of the Egyptian people.

Al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad’s grandchildren are unfortunately put behind bars so that the reader does not see how their dreams come to fruition. Nonetheless, their aspirations and dreams are to see the liberation of their country. *The Cairo Trilogy* ends in 1944 before Egypt can attain true political independence. It is remarkable, though, that after a period of over 80 years in June 2012 the Muslim Brotherhood won the presidential elections with Mohamed Morsi as president since the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak.

2.9 The Myth of Religion as Man's Liberator

2.9.1 Al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad attitude towards religion

In *The Cairo Trilogy*, Mahfouz portrays al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad as a devout Muslim, who, after daily ablutions, earnestly prays to God, asking Him to bless himself, his business and his children. On Fridays he takes his sons to the mosque of al-Husayn for prayer and service, and believes that the visit to the shrine is a blessing which will protect him from evil. Although he reads the Qu'ran he has only managed to memorize a few *suras* or chapters. Nevertheless, he has what Matti (1994:156) calls "a twisted sense of morality [as] his so-called fear of God is a sham, an affront to the majesty and holiness of the being he supposedly fears and worships". This is the reason why Zubayda and Jalila on one occasion tell him that he is outwardly righteous but inwardly dissolute for he enjoys reveling with his close friends, only to come home drunk night after night having indulged in wine, women and song. On the other hand, as Dyer (1990:4) states he demands from his family "stricter adherence to Islam and tradition". Al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad religion is a rite that has to be observed without any profound objective in his life.

2.9.2 Preamble to the major religions in *The Children of the Alley*

In *The Children of the Alley* (*Children of Gebelawi*), Naguib Mahfouz demythologizes man's quest for religion. He gives a panoramic view of man from the beginning to the present, deliberately choosing a simple narrative structure in which he repeats the same incident but expressed in different religions and by their various renowned prophets.

The novel starts by retelling the story of Adam and Eve, here called Adham and Umayma. The novel portrays their fall and subsequent expulsion from heaven, in this instance from the Great House, to the *hara* (the earth). It continues to reveal Adham's endless toil and his experiences of harsh poverty. It continues by relating the history of the children Cain and Abel, here called Quadri and Hammam, respectively. After many years Gebelawi takes pity on Adham by bequeathing his estate to Adham's children and their progeny, in other words mankind, forever and ever. After this Gebelawi disappears into his big and imposing house never to be seen or be heard. However, his powerful and enigmatic presence dominates not only

this alley (*hara*), but “the historical vision of man as well” (Matti, 1994:275). Since Gebelawi cannot manage the estate, it becomes the trustees’ responsibility. Unfortunately, the trustees, who are the ruling class, appropriate the income of the estate to themselves while surrounding themselves by paid henchmen through whom the residents are tyrannically oppressed and denied access to both their grandfather’s estate and personal freedom. As a result, the people of the alley, or Gebelawi’s children, continue to experience history as an endless vicious cycle characterized by desolation and despair. Gordon (1990:87) mentions that *Children of Gebelawi* “can certainly be regarded as an allegoric expression of despair at the ruthlessness and brutality of Egyptian regimes by a person who is in disharmony with the rampant greed, the vile oppression, and the lust for power that trample underfoot the quest for justice and for true faith”. To redress this situation, the different religions intervene. The following section of the thesis is an investigation of the three major religions and Mahfouz’s view about them.

The first of these religions is Judaism, represented in this novel by Gebel/Gabal, the snake charmer who is raised by the Effendi (pharaoh). As Mahfouz narrates the story, Gebel is the analogue of Moses. Believing that he is carrying out the will of Gebelawi, Gebel succeeds in freeing the Al-Hamdan, and restores their former socio-economic, political and religious dignity, as made explicit by the Effendi, “Your rights will be restored, with witnesses” (Mahfouz, 1959:164). However, the freedom Gebel obtains for the Al-Hamdan is transitory. As soon as he dies, the *hara* goes back to its former destitute state of oppression, implying that Judaism has failed to restore man to the elevated state intended by God.

Rifaa, the analogue of Jesus, and, therefore, the representative of Christianity, comes in to try and rescue mankind from his nadir. Rifaa’s focus is spiritual liberation rather than material gain. As he tells his father, “The estate is nothing, Father, and the happiness of a full life is everything. Nothing stands between us and happiness but the demons hiding within us, and it is not for nothing that I should love the treatment of demons and improve on it” (Mahfouz, 1959:204). This view which puts spiritual emancipation above everything else is, according to Mahfouz, the “failure” of Christianity which has kept on telling masses of people that they should not worry about their political or economic status as they will be compensated when they arrive

in heaven. The Al-Gabal community cannot regard Rifaa as anything less than insane, as his teachings fail to address their immediate needs. Rifaa himself thinks that because of his emphasis on sin and spirit, he is not a threat to the secular powers, and that his life is not in danger. But he is wrong as he is unaware that to those who rule by threat and fear, even a person like himself is a threat and hence his subsequent murder. Actually Rifaa's fame and influence only come after his death. However, after Rifaa has been murdered, his supporters free the alley from poverty by killing the trustee and his henchmen, thus restoring order and dignity to the people by distributing the estate justly. No sooner do Rifaa's followers die than the state of life once again reverts to its chaos and subjugation.

Owing to the *status quo* above, Qassem, the analogue of Mohammed, who represents the Muslim religion, comes to rescue the situation. Qassem's stand is different from Rifaa's as he states, "We can cleanse the alley of gangsters only by force. We can only enforce Gabalawi's conditions by force. Justice, mercy and peace can prevail only by force" (Mahfouz, 1959:315). Matti (1994:279) maintains that Mahfouz's emphasis on Qassem's advocacy of force "leads the reader to believe that without it those who want to be successful reformers, religious or otherwise, can never succeed". Although this view is not absolute, Mahfouz shows Gebel, Rifaa's followers and Qassem achieving their objectives through the use of force. The gangsters are indeed destroyed by force and Qassem takes over as trustee who in his duty "combined power and gentleness, wisdom and simplicity, dignity and love, mastery and humility, efficiency and honesty" (Mahfouz, 1959:360). This freedom is, however, also ephemeral because when Qassem dies the alley once more falls victim to fraudulent trustees and oppression. People are devoured by poverty, threatened by clubs, pushed and punched. Filth and flies are everywhere and the place is swarming with beggars, cripples and swindlers. Gebel, Rifaa and Qassem are only names in songs sung by hashish addicted storytellers in the cafes, a sign that the Moslem religion has also failed in its mission until the emergence of Arafa in the last chapter. The myth has, thus, once again been destroyed.

2.10 The Myth of Science as Man's Liberating Tool

In *The Cairo Trilogy* Al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad's son, Kamal, takes Islam studies as part of his curriculum at school and waits impatiently for the religious classes. However, later when his love for Aida Shadad is unrequited, he falls into an abyss of despair and turns to drinking and wenching. He is also influenced by Darwin's evolution theory which eventually makes him rebel against religion in favour of science. Matti (1994:218) finds it ironic for Kamal to be influenced by a Western theory which is "totally alien to a traditional Muslim society". He argues that "although the Western mind is sufficiently latitudinarian to accommodate doctrines considered contradictory and offensive to a religious belief, in a Muslim fundamentalist society that tolerates no doctrine contrary to those contained in the Qu'ran Darwin's theory is wholly anathema". This is the reason why Kamal's father regards Darwin's article, "The Origin of Man", as blasphemous and regards it as a product of atheism. Hence, he earnestly dissuades his son from attacking the Moslem religion. However, Kamal agrees to do so only to avoid arguing with his father and secretly decides to publish his future articles in a magazine his father will never come across. The following extract reveals Kamal's, and in a way Mahfouz's, disposition towards science:

By freeing himself from religion he would be nearer to God than he was when he believed. For what was true religion except science? It was the key to the secrets of existence and to everything really exalted. If the prophets were sent back today, they would surely choose science as their divine message. In this manner the paths leading to God would be open before him – paths of learning, benevolence, and beauty. He would say goodbye to the past with its deceitful dreams, false hopes, and profound pains (Mahfouz, 1957:895).

Kamal thinks that it is only through scientific inquiry and research that mankind will understand God more thoroughly. Through Kamal, Mahfouz is expressing the opinion that science will make life better than religion has done. Science will give life its essence, making it more charming, more aesthetic, for it "holds the keys to the mysteries and majesty of the universe" (Matti, 1994:217). Idli Karim, editor-in-chief of the *New Man* magazine also tells Ahmad Shawkat who intends to study arts at tertiary level:

Artists too must learn their share of science. It's no longer just for scientists. Yes, the responsibility for comprehensive and profound knowledge of the field as well as for research and discoveries in it belongs to the scientists, but every cultured person must illuminate himself with its light, embrace its principles and procedures, and use its style. Science must take the place that prophecy and religion had in the ancient world (Mahfouz, 1957:1072).

Mahfouz's submission is that scientific enquiries and approaches can be applicable in every field of study for finding the ultimate profound truth and knowledge, not just believing things that have not been tested. It is the results of scientifically proven evidence that can set mankind free. Mahfouz actually explores this opinion in depth in *The Children of the Alley*, which deals with the position of religion versus science.

In the last chapter of *The Children of the Alley* Mahfouz abandons religious orthodoxy for science, here symbolized by magic as Rasheed El-Enany (1993:143) puts it, "Mahfouz goes even further in his endeavour to establish science as the legitimate heir of religion." Arafa maintains that "Magic is so wonderful, there is no limit to its power. No one knows where it ends ... some day it will be able to get rid of the gangsters themselves, and build buildings, and provide livings to all the people of this alley" (Mahfouz, 1959:375-391). Indeed, today science and technology have, to a certain extent, made the world a better place to live in. Naguib Mahfouz thus upholds the importance of science by showing that before Gebelawi dies, he gives one of his servants a message to carry to Arafa "Go to Arafa the magician, and tell him for me that his ancestor died pleased with him" (Mahfouz, 1957:473).

However, Mahfouz is not blind to the negative side of science, because as El-Enany (1993:143) explicitly states: "if it falls in the wrong hands, it can be a force of suppression rather than liberation". This is demonstrated by Quadri, the trustee who blackmails and manipulates Arafa to put the invention of the explosives at his service. As he tells Arafa, "You will not be destroyed as long as you obey me" (Mahfouz, 1959:416). Arafa is quick to observe that his Excellency wishes to get rid of the accursed gangsters. Matti (1994:282) asserts that "the modern world has often seen science imprisoned by powerful leaders who use its destructive power without hesitation". Quadri eliminates all his henchmen by the explosive bottles Arafa manufactures. The biological warfare that occurred between 1754 and 1767 when the British gave smallpox-infected blankets to unsuspecting American Indians during

the French and Indian war is just one horrific example which nearly decimated the American Indians. Equally terrifying, as McGovern and Christopher (n.d) in an internet article titled “Biological Warfare and Its Cutaneous Manifestations” maintain, “are the experiments in 1932 which were carried out by the Japanese in China where 11 Chinese cities were attacked with the agents of anthrax, cholera, shigellosis, salmonella and plague, leaving at least 10,000 people dead”. Not so long ago the US ignored the United Nations’ request and invaded Iraq when it did not even have conclusive evidence of the existence of so-called weapons of mass destruction.

The explosive bottles manufactured by Arafa also prove that science and technology have been applied for the creation of destructive instruments of war instead of uplifting humanity. Brian and Nasr in an internet article titled “How Biological and Chemical Warfare Works” claim that

The so-called biological and chemical warfare agents need minimal logistical requirements. Most chemicals are actually manufactured from the sorts of chemicals found in insecticides. For instance, chlorine gas can be manufactured from ordinary table salt, and if inhaled, burns and destroys lung tissues. Human and animal manure carry bacteria which cause cholera and if this is dumped in a town’s well, it would be a simple form of biological warfare.

Despite all these instances of the destructive power of science, Mahfouz’s intended objective is a science “that needs to wed to human feeling, sentiment and understanding” (Matti, 1994:281). Consequently, Mahfouz introduces into Arafa’s life, Awatif, the woman who tries to harness and bridle Arafa. The name Awatif means human sentiment, meaning that her coming into Arafa’s life is an endeavour to tame his wild and destructive notions. Mahfouz’s idea of science, therefore, is that of serving mankind with love and understanding, making life better than what it was before. As a result, after meeting Awatif, Arafa abandons the thought of using his power to take revenge on the tyrants.

Something interesting about Arafa, which is apparently Mahfouz’s stand, is the way he sees the relationship between God and science. In his quest to see and talk to Gebelawi about the secret of his book, Arafa secretly enters Gebelawi’s mansion to find out who Gebelawi is, so that he can clarify man’s concept about God. It is the duty of science to establish and separate truth from myth. Also, he wants to find out

what Gebelawi has written about science in his secret book. He believes that Gebelawi must have recorded something about the laws that should govern science as he asserts, "Something makes me positive that it's a book of magic. Only magic can explain Gebelawi's deeds in the desert – not muscles or a club, as people think" (Mahfouz, 1959:394). This may be interpreted as Arafa's acknowledgement that science is not above God, rather it is God who mandates science. Matti (1994:282), also maintains that "God transcends the material world and has little to do with the proofs and disproofs of his existence by science."

While Arafa moves through the dark room in quest of Gebelawi and the book that he assumes contains the secrets of the universe, he stumbles on the body of an old servant whom he kills in panic. This subsequently leads to the death of Gebelawi who dies of shock and grief on discovering the corpse. Gebelawi's death should not be interpreted literally. God himself does not die. Matti (1994:282) states that what has died, is "the idea of God in man's minds", the anthropomorphic conception of imagining God as if he had a human shape, which is being made explicit by science. After all, the servant who delivers Gebelawi's message to Arafa tells him: "No one killed Gebelawi. No one would have been able to kill him" (Mahfouz, 1959:437). Admittedly, therefore, science illuminates and helps to understand God and His nature better than just swallowing everything without first chewing it. Matti (1994:285) maintains this view when he states, "Science is thus conceived as an instrument not only of empirical truth but freedom of thought and expression ... science has no quarrel with Gebelawi; its real enemy is irrational thought and behavior."

From this discussion it should be clear that Mahfouz does not intend to substitute religion with science. Neither does he doubt the existence of God. Instead the burning question is how best religion can be of service to mankind. If Gebelawi is more than pleased with Arafa, He is not impressed by hurried decisions or conclusions reached emotionally and irrationally. This idea is similar to Hamlet's early philosophizing:

What is a man
If his chief good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more.
Sure he that made us with such large discourse,

Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and godlike reason
To fust in us unus'd. (*Hamlet*: IV.iv.33-39).

2.11 The Role of Women in the Liberation Myth

2.11.1 Towards Islamic feminism

Throughout the history of mankind women have consistently been subjected to the iniquities of patriarchal systems. Patriarchy refers to the rule by the father or a male figure of authority in the family or in society. It is a myth which holds the view that men, because of attributes such as physical strength or aggressive behaviour, are superior to women and that the authority of men over women is God-given. McGee (1987:36) quotes John Bunyan who remarks that a woman should be submissive to her husband even in the case where the husband "is a sot, a fool, and one that hath not wit enough to follow his outward employment in the world". This theory is based on the myth that the man assumes financial responsibility for the family, it is, therefore, natural that he should have absolute power over the woman. A telling portrait of such a model wife is summed up in Shakespeare's *Henry V* 111 when Queen Catherine claims:

I have been to you a true and humble wife,
At all times to your will comfortable
Ever in fear to kindle your dislike
Yea, subject to your countenance, glad or sorry
As I saw it inclin'd. When was the hour
I ever contradicted your desire,
Or made it not mine too? (*Henry 111*.11.iv. 21-27).

This is the picture of a wife who obeys the will of her husband who is everything to her, who knows that her place is lower than his and behaves as his subordinate.

Feminism as a movement is concerned with political, economic and social inequalities, as well as psychological, personal and aesthetic issues between men and women intending, as suggested by Driver (1982:203), "to attempt to bring about new standards against which women would be measured and of dispensing with the old standards." This feminist obligation is also outlined by Weedon (1997:1) in his definition of feminism when he states that, "Feminism is a politics. It is a politics

directed at changing existing power relations between women and men in society. These power relations structure all areas of life, the family, education and welfare, the worlds of work and politics, culture and leisure. They determine who does what and for whom, what we are and what we might become.” Cloete and Madadzhe (2007:38) expand Weedon’s claim by arguing that:

The false superiority complex attributed to maleness is, of course, translated into other spheres of influence such as education, sport, politics, and economics. Owing to this shaky paradigm (on which societies are predicated), women started demanding to be treated with respect and dignity. This is how feminism came into being, and many countries, including South Africa, Sweden and the Netherlands, have adopted legislation which attempts to bring women to a par with men.

Feminism condemns male attitudes towards women, alleging that men have from time immemorial imposed their will on women to convince them of their inherent inferiority as evinced by Truth’s most famous speech, from an internet article titled, “Ain’t I a Woman?” The speech was delivered in 1851 at the Women’s Convention in Akron, Ohio. It is an attack on both racial discrimination against the American negro women as well as patriarchal injustices, making explicit revelations about the demands by women:

That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain’t I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain’t I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man – when I could get it – and bear the lash as well! And ain’t I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most of all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother’s grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain’t I a woman? Then that little man in black there, he says women can’t have as much rights as men, ‘cause Christ wasn’t a woman! Where did your Christ come from? Where did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Him. If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again! And now they is asking to do it, then men better let them.

Feminism in the Islamic world appears to be both difficult and controversial to address as Nordwall (n.d) observes:

In some cases, it is viewed as a construct of the Western world, imposed upon the Middle East and North Africa by imperialism and as such, no reforms of any kind should be implemented. Others choose to believe that women's rights should be accommodated only insofar as they can be justified within an Islamic framework.

Islamic culture and traditions are embedded in the Qur'an as well as in the teachings of the prophet, Muhammed. From the Islamic point of view, therefore, equality between men and women is out of the question as they have different roles to perform which are seen as complementing each other rather than competing with each other. For instance, a man has to carry the burden of economic responsibility of supporting his family which might be comprised of his wife, children, mother, sisters, aunts, and even in-laws at all cost. Politics is also the domain of men, not women. The same applies to military activities. In contrast a woman has to look after her home, the family and bring up the children well. Warraq (n.d), in an article, titled "Islam's Shame Lifting the Veil of Tears" quotes Ghazali from "The Revival of the Religious Science" who defines the woman's role as follows:

She should stay at home and get on with her spinning, she should not go out often, she must not be well-informed, nor must she be communicative with her neighbours and only visit them when absolutely necessary; she must not leave her house without his permission and if given his permission she must leave surreptitiously. She should put on old clothes and take deserted streets and alleys, avoid markets, and make sure that a stranger does not hear her voice or recognize her; she must not speak to a friend of her husband even in need. Her sole worry should be her virtue, her home as well as her prayers and her fast. She should accept what her husband gives her as sufficient sexual needs at any moment. She should be clean and ready to satisfy her husband's sexual needs at any moment.

From the foregoing extract, it is apparent that the woman's first law is absolute obedience to her husband. It is, therefore, the duty of the wife to submit herself to the will of her husband, to be ruled and governed by him, to acknowledge him as her superior and better and give him the respect and honour he deserves. Still, this has to be viewed within the Islamic context. Nordwall (n.d), in an internet article titled, "Egyptian Feminism: The Effects of the State, Popular Trends and Islamism on the Woman's Movement in Egypt" argues that while the Egyptian women continue to work outside the home, marry for love, and speak in public arenas and may not return to the complete domesticity of the earlier times, "Veiling has ... become

increasingly popular among Egyptian women. Increasing numbers of women are also taking the opportunity to return to the home and are focusing on being better wives and mothers, rather than on their careers.” Understandably, any feminist movement intending to liberate Egyptian women should do so through Islamic culture and not through the radical Western-style. This approach is also supported by Faruqi (n.d) in ‘Islamic Traditions and the Feminist Movement’, who vehemently states that, “if feminism is to succeed in an Islamic environment, it must be an indigenous form of feminism, rather than one conceived and nurtured in an alien environment with different problems and different solutions and goals”. So too is Jameelah (n.d) in ‘The Feminist Movement and the Muslim Woman’, who is convinced that, “those who support the Women’s Liberation Movement are revolting against the whole Christian heritage of their own civilization”.

However, the other school of thought argues that Islamic feminism has all along been anchored in both the discourse of Islamic reform and that of secular nationalism. Badran (2002:4), in an internet article, ‘Islamic Feminism: what’s in a name’ argues that, “Secular feminism made Islamic arguments in demanding women’s rights to education, work, political rights along with secular nationalist, humanitarian rights and democratic arguments.” What Badran means is that while the base for Islamic feminism is the Qur’an, the objective is ultimately to attain women’s rights, gender equality and social justice like every one else in any democratic country.

Given this *status quo*, the following is an examination of the role of a few female characters in *The Cairo Trilogy*. In the said text, especially in *Palace Walk*, women receive very little recognition, meaning that freedom is still an unattainable myth. Their place is literally in the home. Amina stays at home, and her real place is the kitchen as Mahfouz (1957:19) states, “if Amina, in the upper stories, felt she was a deputy or representative of the ruler, lacking any authority of her own, here she was the queen, with no rival to her sovereignty. Here she was the mother, wife, teacher, and artist everyone respected”. Concerning other family affairs, her status diminishes and she is not expected to open her mouth. Hence, when she once objects to al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad’s escapades, he seizes her by the ears and peremptorily tells her, “I’m a man. I’m the one who commands and forbids. I will not accept any criticism of my behaviour. All I ask you is to obey me. Don’t force me to

discipline you" (Mahfouz, 1957:8). The short sentences depict his anger and the domineering nature of a patriarch whose word is law. Nonetheless, Amina is challenging the abusive patriarchal practices which turn women into inanimate objects. It is from this chastisement that she learns to toe the line in silence and

to adapt to everything in order to escape the glare of his wrathful eye. It was her duty to obey him without reservation or condition. She yielded so wholeheartedly that she even disliked blaming him privately for his nights out. She became convinced that true manliness, tyranny, and staying out till after midnight were common characteristics of a single entity. With the passage of time she grew proud of whatever he meted out, whether it pleased or saddened her. No matter what happened, she remained a loving, obedient, and docile wife. She had no regrets at all about reconciling herself to a type of security based on surrender (Mahfouz, 1957:8).

This is the picture of a woman who has accepted the myth of male domination by resigning herself to the bottomless pit of dehumanization, and accepting the myth that she is inferior to her husband to a point where she is comfortable with the condition. She is not ready to lift a finger to object to any evil her husband might commit. In actual fact, Rafiqul-Haqq and Newton (1996) mention that

The obedience of the woman to her husband is an important prerequisite that shows her piety and guarantees her eternal destiny. He is her paradise or her hell. Man is thus so elevated that by comparison with the woman, he is placed on a divine level. Her response to him approaches worship.

This is the relationship that exists between Amina and her husband al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad. She has got used to waiting for her husband when he comes home after midnight and she has to wait on him hand and foot. She is not even allowed to visit the mosque of al-Husayn, though it is only a few minutes' walk from the house. El-Enany (1993:84) adds that

like the culture she represents, she lived in complete isolation, cocooned inside the walls of her home in old Cairo, where all she could see of the outside world was the view from the roof, which consisted of nothing but the minarets of mosques and the roofs of adjacent houses.

When she has to visit her mother in al-Khurunfush, al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad has to escort her in a carriage because he cannot bear for anyone to see his wife,

either alone or unaccompanied by him. This subordination makes Amina a stranger to the world she lives in. For instance, the day al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad undertakes a business trip to Port Said, her sons encourage her to visit the mosque of al-Husayn just this once, with disastrous consequences:

As she crossed the threshold of the outer door and entered the street, she experienced a moment of panic. Her mouth felt dry and her pleasure was dispelled by a fit of anxiety. She had an oppressive feeling of doing something wrong. She moved slowly and grasped Khamal's hand nervously. Her gait seemed disturbed and unsteady, as though she had not mastered the first principles of walking. She was gripped by intense embarrassment as she showed herself to the eyes of people she had known for ages but only through the peephole of the enclosed balcony (Mahfouz, 1957:177-178).

Since Amina is not familiar with the environment outside her house, she is gripped by fear, nervousness and insecurity. She feels as if she is committing a heinous crime or an intolerable sin. Even her legs are rigid and unfamiliar with walking outside one's house. Everything around her is ethereal and weird. In actual fact, her contact with the outside world becomes catastrophic in its consequence as she is hit by a car on her way home and suffers a broken collarbone which confines her to bed for three weeks. As a result of this her husband temporarily exiles her to her mother's home, "as punishment for tasting of the forbidden tree-of-knowledge-of-the-extra-domestic" (El-Enany, 1993:84). Nonetheless, the fact that she takes a chance to visit al-Husayn's mosque is an indication of her yearning for personal freedom.

What we see about Amina in the first part of *The Cairo Trilogy*, *Palace Walk*, takes a different turn in the second book, *Palace of Desire*. Amina metamorphoses with time from being reserved to being outspoken. She acquires a new personality which will neither keep quiet nor ever be confined to the house. This is evident during an incident in which Yasin, al-Sayyid's son by his first wife, Haniya, announces that he wants to marry Maryam, their neighbour, a girl in whom the late Fahmy had once been interested. In the past Amina would have reserved such a matter to her husband, for then she had no opinion of her own but his. However, owing to the change that has come over her, an instance where a woman breaks away from the myth of male domination, she confronts Yasin without hiding her hostility and indignation as she tells him "Them? Impossible! Do you mean what you are saying,

Yasin?" When he responds with a sullen silence, she screams "What dreadful news! Those people who gloated over our greatest misfortune?" (Mahfouz, 1957:658). Amina is alleging that Maryam's family was unsympathetic to them when Fahmy died, and because of that, she does not want to have anything to do with them. When Yasin tries to protest, she yells:

"My Lord! Why is a catastrophe like this necessary? They're riddled with defects and vices. Is there one good point to justify this outrageous selection? Maryam? The girl's no good, have you forgotten her scandalous past? Have you really forgotten that? Do you want to bring that girl into our home?" (Mahfouz, 1957:658).

This passage shows Amina's anger. She regards Yasin's marriage to Maryam as a disgrace, not only to himself but to the family as well since she regards Maryam's family as below their standard. The "scandalous past" is an incident in which Maryam was discovered exchanging flirtatious smiles with the English soldier, Julian, as witnessed and innocently publicized by the young Kamal, a fact which breaks Fahmy's heart and leads to al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad's family regarding her as unchaste and a slut. Such conduct is considered unclean by Muslims. Admittedly, Amina's accusation of Maryam is not unreasonable. In any event, what the researcher wants to illustrate is the change that has come over Amina. Mahfouz also admits that, "she shouted at him with a sharpness that would have been totally alien to her in the old days" (Mahfouz, 1957:659). During an interrogation in which al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad asks his son Kamal about an article the latter has published based on Darwin's theory about the evolution of man, though Amina cannot precisely follow the argument, she keeps on interjecting, "Sir, I want him to be a scholar like his grandfather, illuminating the world with God's light" or "From now on dedicate your life to exposing the lies of this science and spreading the light of God" (Mahfouz, 1957:893).

There are more examples of the change Amina has undergone. Unlike in the past, Amina can now visit the shrine of al-Husayn, the cemetery, and her two daughters, Khadija and Aisha, on Sugar Street as often as she wants, without first obtaining permission from her husband. Kamal, her son, comments, "You're not a prisoner in the house as you once were" (Mahfouz, 1957:709). She too discloses that when she visits her daughters, besides reassuring herself about them, she wants "to resolve

the problems no one else seems able to handle” (Mahfouz, 1957:709). When she visits al-Husayn’s mosque, her intention is to pray for her children. These two duties, namely, solving problems and praying for children, have been the prerogatives of men, not women. The only place where she has ever been respected has been in the oven room.

Al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad’s first wife, Haniya, is a woman who is a master of her own fate. When she is living with him, she resists his domineering will. Mahfouz informs the reader that, “She saw no harm in enjoying some freedom, even if it was limited to visiting her father from time to time. Al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad had grown angry and had attempted to restrain her, at first by scolding her and then by violent beatings” (Mahfouz, 1957:115).

It is a Muslim myth that a man cannot be asked why he beats his wife as this practice has been mandated by the Qu’ran, Sura 4:34 which states that, “men are the maintainers of women and spend their property on women; therefore, the good women must be obedient, and to those women on whose part you fear desertion, admonish them, and leave them alone in the sleeping places and beat them” (Darabi, 2004:3). Nevertheless, Haniya flees to her parents and al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad thinks he will discipline her by divorcing her. To his disappointment, the in-laws do not send anybody to him to reconcile him to his wife till he decides to send a messenger to them. To his further embarrassment, their response is that “they would welcome him on condition that he would not forbid her (Haniya) to leave the house and would not beat her” (Mahfouz, 1957:116). Evidently the in-laws do not accept al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad’s patriarchal behaviour brought about by the myth that men are superior to women, and that spells the end of their marriage. The fact that Haniya and her people refuse al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad’s treatment of his wife reveals their desire for liberation from patriarchal practices.

Khadija, al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad’s daughter, is another woman whose forceful personality deserves some attention. El-Enany (1993:78) describes Khadija as “ugly, energetic, responsible, totally committed to her family, and above all useful”. Before she gets married, she is portrayed as assertive as well as hardworking, which makes her a real asset to the family. When she weds Ibrahim Shawkat she proves to

be the stronger party in the marriage, and she imposes “Jawadianism in the heartland of Shawkatism” (El-Enany, 1993:78). For instance, her forceful character creates a scene concerning the kitchen. The issue is whether there should be a single kitchen for the entire household under the supervision of the Widow Shawkat, or whether Khadija should have her own kitchen as she desires:

Galvanized by her own stubbornness, Khadija had continued her crusade relentlessly and persistently, until the older woman had gotten fed up and grudgingly granted her “gypsy” daughter-in-law an independent kitchen, telling her elder son, “So much for you. You’re a weak man, powerless to discipline your wife. You’re getting your just reward, which is to be deprived of my cooking forever” (Mahfouz, 1957:569).

The word “galvanized” figuratively means to stimulate as if by an electric current. Khadija’s action is regarded as unnatural since she is forced to act by a force outside herself. Ironically, stubbornness is an element one acquires or is born with. This simply means once Khadija decides on doing something, nothing will stop her. The word also means to cover (iron or steel) with a thin coating of zinc to protect it from rusting. In this sense, Khadija herself is like iron or steel coated with stubbornness to keep her inflexible in her decisions. Her request to have a separate kitchen is compared to a crusade, meaning that it is a vigorous campaign or battle in which she engages uncompromisingly and tirelessly, just as Egypt is doing to attain her freedom from Britain. By choosing the word “gypsy” in referring to Khadija, the Widow Shawkat may be comparing her to the Gypsy Moth, which is a large European moth that is a serious pest in fruit orchards and forests. Khadija’s conduct, which has “disorganized” the family setup, is being compared to the destructive nature of the Gypsy Moth. The nomadic nature of the gypsies is also a possible reference for choosing to have her own separate kitchen from that of her mother-in-law. Although the Widow Shawkat is obstinate, Khadija finally gets what she wants. The Widow Shawkat may symbolize Britain which is begrudging Egypt its right to autonomy, scoring another victory in the myth against patriarchy.

Seemingly, the Widow Shawkat believes herself to be the best cook ever, and would prefer to cook for her sons even when they are married. Hence she tells her son Ibrahim that he will be “deprived of [her] cooking forever”. Obviously the Widow

Showkat needs to be liberated from the myth that as a country her cooking is the best. Of course symbolically it is Britain that believes in the myth that she alone can do the best, hence her resistance to liberate Egypt. Khadija's move enables her to retrieve the copper pots and pans that were part of her trousseau. Her kitchen is even arranged according to her specifications, which would not have happened unless she was unrelenting. Symbolically, if Egypt gets her autonomy, she obviously has to order her affairs in her own fashion far different from the way Britain has been managing her.

Besides the issue about the kitchen, Khadija also takes over the part of the rooftop where the Widow Shawkat raised chickens and forces the latter to move them into the yard to make way for her garden. This symbolizes Egypt's repossessing her usurped resources. The Widow Shawkat complains that Khadija is disrespectful as she calls her aunt instead of mother, but Khadija stubbornly maintains that she has only one mother and not two. Symbolically, this might be interpreted to mean that Egypt cannot be ruled by two countries at the same time, hence the urgency for obtaining her freedom from Britain. For the sake of achieving her goal, Khadija has to sacrifice the ties of friendship that had bound her and the Widow Shawkat ever since the former was born. Later Khadija informs her husband:

I know my duties and how to perform them in the best possible way. But I did not like to sit at home while food was carried in from outside as though we were guests at a hotel. If that weren't enough, unlike someone I know, I could not bear to spend my whole day sleeping or playing, while another person looked after my house (Mahfouz, 1957:570).

From this passage one can assert that the desire to be liberated is everywhere and in every class of people. Unlike her sister Aisha, referred to as "someone I know", Khadija takes delight in doing things with her own hands. She is pragmatic and dislikes slothfulness. Khadija raises an important point here to imply that Egypt cannot be pleased by watching another country performing her duties as if she herself behaves like a guest. This actually suggests the necessity of Egypt's freedom from the British. When the Widow Shawkat sarcastically attacks Khadija about her unlady-like bearing, she retaliates:

"This is a virtue for maids to brag about, not ladies,"

Khadija had shot back, "The only vocation you people have is eating and drinking. The true master of a house is the person who takes care of it."

In the same scornful tone, the old lady had replied, "If they instilled such ideas in you at home, it was to conceal their opinion that you would never be good for anything except domestic service."

Then the younger woman had screamed, "I know why you're furious with me. I've known ever since I refused to let you push me around in my own home" (Mahfouz, 1957:575).

It is actually funny that the Widow Shawkat accuses Khadija of demeaning her status as a lady by doing what is supposed to be done by maids while she also takes delight in cooking for her own sons and their wives even at her age. She too is like Britain which wants to continue managing Egyptian affairs even when the latter wants to be independent from her. Khadija is able to see that the old widow is acrimonious for having lost her powers. Fortunately, Khadija is outspoken and as a result she is able to state her case and she, therefore, attains her freedom from her domineering mother-in-law. Their conflict indeed represents a larger conflict of interests between the two countries. Britain is assured of the myth that Egypt cannot do without her, while the latter thinks she is matured enough to look after her own affairs.

Khadija is also decisive about the way in which to bring up her children, a task which is traditionally supposed to be carried out by Ibrahim as a man. Perceiving the role of education, she takes her son Abd al-Muni'm to the religious school, without her husband's consent. This is a duty supposed to be done by her husband. She is ambitious to see her children through to university as well as being important leaders in the country, a dream that does not come true as one is arrested for being a Muslim Brother while the other is arrested for being a Marxist. Ibrahim accuses Khadija of having "thrust" Abd al-Muni'm into a religious school before he is five. The word "thrust" implies that Khadija has forced the school authorities to register the child against the school rules. However, Khadija proudly retorts:

"If I had taken your advice, I would have let him stay at home till he came of age. There seems to be some hostility against learning in your family. No, darling, my children will be raised like their maternal uncles. I review Abd al-Muni'm's lessons with him myself. Abd al-Muni'm and Ahmad will continue their studies until they receive university degrees. It will be a new era in the Shawkat family" (Mahfouz, 1957:578-9).

This is an expression of the wish to attain the myth of freedom. The passage shows the stance Khadija has taken about her children's education since she does not want them to be like their father who could not go beyond primary level. As a result, she has given herself the task of supervising their children's schoolwork to instill a love for learning into them. A major breakthrough, though, is that Khadija has freed herself from the domineering male world and is able to decide what is best for herself and her children. She has demonstrated that women, given the chance, are not inferior to men, they are capable of doing what men can. If she had not freed herself she would have to be submissive to her husband even when things are going astray. Later when Aisha tries to dissuade Khadija from usurping her husband's role in running the family, the latter retorts, "But at my house – and yours is just the same – the father is present only in name, what can I do when the situation's like that? If the father's a mother, then the mother must be a father" (Mahfouz, 1957:580).

Given Khadija's audacity and Ibrahim's taciturnity, the former has no choice but to assume the leading role in the family. So, she demythologizes the myth that women are weak, incompetent, and less intelligent than men. Likewise she demystifies the myth about men being strong, intelligent and people who never fail. Ibrahim's younger brother, Khalil Shawkat, who is married to Khadija's younger sister, Aisha, is not different from the brother, hence the remark, "and yours is just the same". Unfortunately, the reticent Aisha is no Khadija, although she too has changed. For instance, she now smokes and occasionally drinks with her husband, throws parties for her friends, and enjoys singing and dancing, practices which would never be associated with Muslim women. This change in Aisha shows the transition from the old to the new. As a matter of fact, this change is representative of the dynamism that exists in cultural, socio-economical and political issues.

Another woman who needs to be examined is Zanuba. She is Zubayda's niece and plays the lute and is, therefore, a member of Zubayda's troupe. She is introduced when she falls in love with Yasin in Zubayda's house where the former unexpectedly discovers that, "the 'Divine' [al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad], is also human, that 'God' can laugh and drink and play the tambourine as well as fornicate" (El-Enany, 1993:82), an aspect that is completely hidden from all his family members who know

him as impeachable and a strict disciplinarian. As soon as Yasin marries his first wife, Zynab, he dumps her [Zanuba] and she disappears from the scene for almost six years. She reappears when al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad resumes his orgies at one of his colleagues' houseboat. Al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad stopped going out after the death of his beloved son Fahmy. When al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad tries to flirt with Zanuba she becomes rude to him because she knows he is Yasin's father. Nonetheless, she is intent on draining his pockets to secure a luxurious life for herself. She is also aware that as a well-known lute player, she is associated with loose morals. She suppresses this idea by ensuring that he wins her after long and demanding attempts, and on condition that he builds her a houseboat on the Nile River. As she makes this demand, she tells him, "remember that if I ask you to make me a lady, it's only because it's not appropriate for your mistress to be anything less than that" (Mahfouz, 1957:649). This statement elucidates Zanuba's dream for better things in life, including a higher social standing in society. Earlier she told al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad, "And if you love me as much as you claim, then my luck should not be inferior to the sultana's" (Mahfouz, 1957:648). The sultana she is referring to is Zubayda, al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad ex-lover.

After accepting him, al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad attempts to make love to her, but she resolutely objects, telling him, "When we're in our houseboat on the Nile, not in this house where I've worked as a servant. Wait till we're united in the new home, yours and mine. Then I'll be yours forever. Not before then. I ask it for the sake of our new life together" (Mahfouz, 1957:649).

By refusing his advances she demythologizes the Muslim myth that regards women as sex objects. Zanuba knows very well what she wants and is resolved to get it. She has decided to transform her socio-economic status, a view supported by Warraq (n.d) who states, "Financial independence of the woman would be the first step in the liberation of Muslim women." Literally, Zanuba's demands cost al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad a fortune despite his being a prosperous merchant. Once the houseboat has been completed, she breaks off her ties with Zubayda, the sultana, as well as with the troupe and leads an independent glamorous life. She is after all economically liberated and owns property. She even changes from wearing the traditional black wrap to wearing European dresses, freeing herself from the Muslim

myths associated with the *hijab*. Chopra (n.d), in an internet article titled “Liberation by the Veil” makes this assertion concerning *hijab*:

A woman who adheres to the tenets of Islam is required to follow the dress code called Hijab, other synonyms are Veil, Purdah, or just Covering. A Muslim woman who covers her head is making a statement about her identity. Anyone who sees her will know that she is a Muslim and has a good moral character. Many Muslim women who cover are filled with dignity and self esteem; they are pleased to be identified as a Muslim woman. As a chaste, modest, pure woman, she does not want her sexuality to enter into interactions with men in the smallest degree. A woman who covers herself is concealing her sexuality but allowing her femininity to be brought out.

The *hijab* is associated with modesty and chastity. Chopra (n.d) even states that, “the covering of the Muslim woman is not oppression but a liberation from the shackles of male scrutiny and the standards of attractiveness”, a view supported by Kasem who alleges that, “*Hijab* has been forced on every woman whether she likes it or not. Wearing no *hijab* may invite severe punishment ... Anyone who rejects the principle of *hijab* is an apostate and the punishment for an apostate under Islamic law is death.” This statement contrasts with Zanuba’s perception. This is a noteworthy change considering the strict Muslim culture about women’s clothing. Her dress code, however, also represents new changes as a result of the fact that no culture is static.

When she meets Yasin, her former paramour, while being fully aware of her illicit affair with his father, she is ready to revive their former romance, although on a different note. He asks her to continue like they did in the former days and she dauntlessly tells him: “I don’t care about your money, but I’m sick of living in sin.” She knows she is financially well-off as she has pushed al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad to spend large sums of money on her. Zanuba is tired of being a kept woman. She is craving a modest and dignified life. That night, after a drinking spree with him, she puts up at Yasin’s house, the latter having declared his intention to divorce his wife. Under Islamic law, once a woman is divorced, she has to leave the house. As a matter of fact, Zanuba only goes back to the houseboat the following afternoon. When al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad pries about her previous night’s whereabouts, a fierce and bloody quarrel ensues, and she tells him, “If your understanding of our

relationship is that I'm to stay here as your *prisoner*, then the best thing for both of us is to break it off" (Mahfouz, 1957:842). Zanuuba realizes that the time has come to liberate herself from the shackles of patriarchy or be oppressed forever. This declaration for independence shows women fighting for their rights. Taking advantage of the quarrel, she threatens him with her intended marriage to a younger merchant (Yasin), if he is not prepared to marry her:

"I didn't wish to tell you in so many words that certain people want a better life for me than this ... "

"What do you mean?" he inquired indignantly.

"A respectable gentleman wishes to marry me. He won't take no for an answer" ...

"Is that so?" he asked.

"Let me tell you bluntly that I can't stand this life any longer."

"Really?"

"Yes. I want a secure life and a legal one. Or do you think that's wrong? If marrying me would disgrace you, then goodbye."

He asked her critically, "Is that what you think of me?"

"I don't think much of a person who treats me like spit."

Sadly and calmly he said, "You're dearer to me than my soul."

"Words! we've heard a lot of them."

Holding his hands out to her, he said, "Come to me."

She drew herself back resolutely in the chair and said, "When God sanctions it" (Mahfouz, 1957:843-7).

At this stage Yasin has not yet said anything about marrying Zanuuba. The statement that someone wishes to marry her is thus meant to irk and spite al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad. Even so, Zanuuba is yearning for liberation from a despised life to a respected one. Al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad's calm voice is revealing his scornful and deep-seated wrath especially after having sacrificed so much by building the houseboat and buying gifts for Zanuuba. The short questions "Is that so?" and "Really?" show his shock and disbelief at Zanuuba's unsavoury and unexpected stance. Al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad never thought that his patriarchal figure would ever be challenged by any woman, let alone a woman from a lower station. Her daring at this stage shows that she has emancipated herself from the myth of male domination. She is confident about herself and is capable of taking decisive decisions.

Al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad goes out in an almost delirious state of mind but comes back again resolved not to marry Zanuuba and to throw her out of the

houseboat. After a heated exchange, he tells her to collect her clothes and leave the houseboat. He instead receives a shock of his life when she explodes like a bomb:

Listen carefully to what I say. One more word from you, and I'll make such a row it'll resound throughout the houseboat, the road, and the riverfront until the entire police force arrives. Do you hear? I'm not some little morsel that's easily swallowed. I'm Zanuba! May God repay me for my suffering. You go! This is my houseboat. The lease is in my name. Go peacefully before you're escorted out (Mahfouz, 1957:853).

No one would ever think a Muslim woman could stand up against a Muslim man in a Muslim country which is red taped with Qu'ranic verses in every household and every street, and tell him to his face what is supposed to be done. This is a novel experience unheard of in the Muslim world. When Zanuba refuses to go and tells al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad to go instead, she defies the Muslim myths about relationships between men and women, and transmutes herself from the old submissive woman into a new being with renewed courage. And out he goes, disconcerted and humbled.

Both Yasin and Zanuba who represent middle and lower Egyptian classes respectively, manage to liberate themselves from the myth of class consciousness. Though Yasin's family members are embarrassed by his marriage to Zanuba, he goes ahead with it. When Al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad learns of Zanuba's marriage to Yasin, he tells the latter that he has compromised the honour of the whole family by marrying a disreputable woman. He consequently asks his son to divorce her before she can conceive and disgrace the family again. Of course the other scandal that al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad is trying to avoid is to see Yasin marrying his own mistress who after joining the family would be his daughter-in-law. Ironically, by this time Zanuba has already conceived and the family is stuck with the shame of a son having married a whore, though by so doing Yasin demonstrates that he no longer wishes to be bound by the myth of marrying from his class. Though Zanuba fails to marry the father al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad, she at least marries his son, Yasin, who actually makes her a lady in every respect.

The three women, Haniya, Khadija and Zanuba, can be seen as symbols of liberation from the patriarchal system that has suppressed women for too long. Symbolically

they represent Egypt, their motherland, in her struggle for liberation from the British. Their aspirations and dreams for a life that is not harnessed and bridled are similar to those of their country. When Zanuba frees herself from al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad, there are two things that she achieves, namely, economic freedom and a better social standing, which is symbolic of what Egypt can possibly achieve in liberating itself from English rule. Although Haniya is lonely, she is financially strong and she is able to manage her own affairs.

Beside liberating themselves from male domination, Egyptian women have to liberate themselves from illiteracy. Amongst the Muslims there is a myth that a woman's space is the private sphere of the home while that of a man is in the public sphere. The internet article, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Female-political-leaders-in-Islam-and-in-Muslim-majority-countries> also adds that, "a woman's primary responsibility is usually interpreted as fulfilling her role as a wife and mother, whereas a man's role is to work and be able to financially support his wife and family". This myth has relegated women to an inferior position and, "has left half the population illiterate and downtrodden" (<http://members.chello.nl/a.whichman2/islam.html>). Commenting on women's education, Nordwall (n.d) quotes Keddie, who argues that around 1925 although the Islamic society generally supported the trend of sending girls to school

the goal of this was not to encourage women to work outside the home or to aspire to fill traditionally male roles. In contrast, it was thought that an increase in women's education would make them more effective housewives and mothers. The movement focussed on improving female knowledge of childcare, hygiene, and nutrition, rather than academic interests, critical thinking or religious scholarship.

Hikmat (n.d), in an internet article titled, "Status of Women in Islam", states that,

"We are not allowed to study in co-education schools and colleges and if a separate college for women is not available we have to discontinue our studies. We are neither allowed to talk to men (other than close relatives) nor allowed to participate in social gatherings. Even when we go out occasionally and we have to observe the 'PURDAH' system (covering our entire body with special black dress). All in the name of Islam and Allah."

Virginia Woolf, an early ground-breaking European feminist, in her novel titled *A Room of One's Own* (1929), stresses the theme of the lack of freedom for women.

Hikmat further argues that the basis of this discrimination is that women are considered less intelligent than their male counterparts, as she unambiguously states:

As per Islam the testimonies of two women is equal to one man (even though the woman is a University Professor or a Doctor still she is considered less intelligent than an illiterate male). The criterion here is not intelligence but gender ... See the trend of the logic. First argument is 'Less legal rights to less intelligent people'. Second argument is, 'Woman is less intelligent than man', therefore, she should have fewer rights than man. Many Muslim fundamentalists state that even 'Scientifically' an average woman is less intelligent than an average man.

In *The Cairo Trilogy* education is not accessible to women. Khadija and Aisha, al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad's daughters, remain at home while their brothers, Yasin, Fahmy and Kamal go to school. This is clearly reiterated by Tambu's father who states in *Nervous Conditions* (Dangarembga, 1988) that Tambu cannot feed her husband on books. Therefore education has no meaning for a traditional woman. The Egyptians believed that female children did not need to be educated since theirs was to be married and look after children. However, the younger generations' thirst to be liberated from the myth of illiteracy is reflected in the following passage:

They were silent for a time, as though the song had distracted them. Then Na'ima said, "I saw my friend Salma in the street today. She was in grade school with me. Next year she's going to sit for the baccalaureate examination."

Aisha commented with annoyance, "If only your grandfather had let you stay in school, you would have surpassed her. But he refused!"

The protest implied by Aisha's final phrase did not escape her mother, who said, "Her grandfather has his ideas, which he won't abandon. Would you have wanted her to pursue her studies, despite the effort involved, when she's a delicate darling who can't stand fatigue?"

Aisha shook her head without speaking, but Na'ima said with regret, "I wish I had finished my education. All the girls study today, just like boys."

Umm Hanafi observed scornfully, "They study because they can't find a bridegroom. But a beauty like you ..."

Amina nodded her head in agreement and said, "You're educated, young lady. You have the grade school certificate. Since you won't find a job, what more than that would you want? Let's pray that God strengthen you, clothe your captivating beauty with health, and put some meat and fat on your bones" (Mahfouz, 1957:989).

Na'ima is Aisha's daughter and Amina's granddaughter. She is two generations apart from Amina and her husband al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad who has denied the little girl a chance to further her studies due to the myth he holds to about girls not being educated. Umm Hanafi is no exception to this and believes in the marriage of girls and nothing more. However, Aisha and her daughter Na'ima desperately wish that the latter had not been prevented from going to school. The desire for women to be liberated from the myth of illiteracy is also visible amongst their male counterparts. When Ahmad Shawkat, who is one of Khadija's sons and leader of Marxism, considers marriage with his cousin Na'ima, though she is beautiful, he finds that she has a defect, "She's very beautiful but seems glued to her mother and has had very little education" (Mahfouz, 1957:1009). Ahmad wishes Na'ima had been educated so that she could be his match, a desire that men have to marry educated women. However, education is not the be-all and end-all as some wish to see their daughters employed after they have finished school:

Yasin's neighbour told him, "My daughter will do the baccalaureate examination this year. I'll sign her up for the Teacher Training Institute, and then I'll be able to stop worrying about her. It doesn't cost anything, and there will be no difficulty finding her a job after she graduates."

Yasin said, "You've done the best thing."

The man asked him argumentatively, "What have you planned for Karima? If she does well in elementary school, she'll succeed in secondary school too. Girls today are a safer bet in school than boys."

"We don't send our girls to secondary school. Why not? Because they're not going to take jobs."

A third man asked, "Does talk like this make any sense in 1938?"

"In our family they'll be saying it in 2038" (Mahfouz, 1957:1145-46).

With the exception of Yasin, who takes after his father al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad, the others have done away with the myth of keeping girls illiterate. It is ironic for Yasin to commend his colleague for educating his daughter when he is not ready to take Karima to secondary school. It has virtually become a ritual to the family though the victims have the desire to be well educated. This desire to be educated is

vividly demonstrated in Ngugi's *The River Between* and *Weep Not, Child*. In *The River Between* Waiyaki is carried away by the myth of education to such an extent that he ignores the immediate issues of the political struggle. Njoroge in *Weep Not, Child*, is absorbed in education at the expense of his personal safety. For instance, when his father warns him that he should stop going to school because of the Mau Mau threats, he ignores the warning. As a direct contrast to Njoroge, Viliki in Mda's *The Madonna of Excelsior*, leaves school to join the Movement in order to fight for South Africa's political liberation. However, Niki wishes that her son Viliki should not have left school, as she kept on "nagging him for absconding from school before completing matric" (Mda, 2002:127).

Concerning employment in Egypt, certain jobs were reserved for men and others for women. Nordwall (n.d) also mentions that "opportunities for women to work remained limited. Nursing was discouraged, working with heavy machinery was forbidden, and for a long time, teaching remained the only respectable position for a woman to hold." Hartman (2011:2), also states that although in recent decades Egyptian women have come to outnumber men at university, "[they] earn less. Only a small fraction make it into management. And fewer women find work; men get first shot at jobs in an informal pecking order that favors males supporting their wives and children." This myth is also being demythologized. Besides, Zanuba, Yasin's wife, desires her daughter to go to school in spite of Yasin's negativism. When we later come across Karima, she too wishes she had been given the opportunity to attend school:

Yasin said, "Karima's still sorry she didn't go to secondary school." Frowning, Zanuba said, "I'm even sorrier than she is."

Ibrahim Shawkat commented, "The effect the exertion of studying has on girls concerns me. Besides, a girl is going to end up at home. It's only a year or two before Karima will be married off to some lucky fellow." Zanuba responded, "That's what people used to say. But now all girls go to school."

Khadija said, "In our district there are two girls who are studying for advanced degrees, but God knows they are no beauties." Ahmad responded, "The love of learning is not restricted to ugly girls" (Mahfouz, 1957:1158-59).

Despite the failure of al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad and the Shawkat family to see the value of allowing girls to further their studies beyond elementary level, other Egyptians have been weaned from that myth, hence the two girls “studying for advanced degrees”. This incident reinforces the desire for women’s liberation from the myth of illiteracy there in spite of the conservative families they hail from. The same idea underpins much of *The Heart of Redness*.

Egyptian women have experienced numerous difficulties in politics. An internet article, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Female-political-leaders-in-Islam-and-in-Muslim-majority-countries> makes the following comment about the position of women in politics in Islamic countries:

Women in Islamic societies still face enormous threats as political leaders. On February 20, 2007 a female Pakistani minister, Zilla Huma Usman, was shot dead by a Muslim man, Mohammad Sarwar, who stated "I have no regrets. I just obeyed Allah's commandment," adding that Islam did "not allow women to hold positions of leadership."

The foregoing extract underlines the myth that men have about women in positions of leadership in some Muslim countries. Such a myth seems to have some relationship with the Prophet’s *hadith* that maintains that “people with a female ruler will never be successful”. This *hadith* has, therefore, been used as an excuse to deny women the right to participate in public affairs.

Although Mahfouz makes no mention of women’s participation in the Egyptian revolution of 1919, other sources do. For instance, Rizk (2000:1) mentions that “women took to the streets, joining men in the demonstrations for freedom and coming under fire from British occupation forces”. This information is augmented by another internet article, (http://www.ecwronline.org/english/researchers/2004/political_rights.htm), which asserts:

Egyptian women have participated in popular resistance activities against foreign occupation, whether it was the French occupation in 1798, or the British occupation in 1882. On March 16th, 1919, Egyptian women organized, for the first time, large public marches and demonstrations against the British occupation. On March 20th, 1919, Egyptian women calling for independence organized a second large demonstration. As a result, the British bullets killed a woman named Shafika Mohamed and several other women lost their lives during the first stage of the revolution.

In spite of the myth that Muslim women are not allowed to participate in public activities, especially political ones, they temporarily suspended the myth and religious beliefs to support their male counterparts in their struggle for emancipation from British occupation. They risked their lives as they were equally concerned. Another internet article (<http://www.onwar.com/aced/data/echo/Egypt+1919a.htm>), makes the following comment about women's participation in the 1919 Egyptian revolution:

On March 16, between 150 and 300 upper-class Egyptian women in veils staged a demonstration against the British occupation, an event that marked the entrance of Egyptian women into public life. The women were led by Safia Zaghlul, wife of Wafd leader Saad Zaghlul; Huda Sharawi, wife of one of the original members of the Wafd and organizer of the Egyptian Feminist Union; and Muna Fahmi Wissa. Women of the lower classes demonstrated in the streets alongside the men. In the countryside, women engaged in activities like cutting rail lines.

This extract shows women from all social strata actively engaged in the strike. They are not only engaged in demonstrations but literally destroying property to frustrate the British government for the liberation of their country. The women's destruction of property is also confirmed by the internet article (<http://www.onwar.com/aced/data/echo/Egypt+1919a.htm>), which states that women's demonstrations "covered all forms of revolutionary activities, including destruction of means of transport, obstruction of supplies to the British army and boycott activities". All these actions are demonstrative of the aspirations the Egyptian women had to be liberated from the British. Their actions also demystify the myth about their inferior status to men.

Rizk (2000:1) mentions Hoda Sha'rawi as a pioneer in the emancipation of women, "who turned her aristocratic status and plunged into national action, forming several feminist societies and leading the feminist wing of the 1919 revolution". Besides organizing anti-British protests, she is also said to have "led the boycott against British products in 1922". One is also struck by the activities of women in the Egyptian rural areas as it is usually women in the cities who are active in politics. However, in spite of the substantive support and participation of women in the Egyptian revolutions, the internet article (<http://www.ecwronline.org/english/researches/2004/politicalrights.htm>), states that:

Women's participation in political decision-making bodies is limited. Analysis of trends in women's representation in parliamentary assemblies and councils at the national and local levels indicate that, overall, little or no progress has been made and substantial gender differences still exist. Many women play economic and intellectual roles, but are denied the opportunity to fulfil their potential to the fullest scope. Such women seldom have the opportunity to compete for leadership positions, particularly in the political arena. Egyptians still regard politics as a male domain, and women still lack equal access to the power structure that shapes Egyptian society.

2.12. Literature and the Myth of Liberation

Throughout the world, literature is regarded as a mouthpiece to voice public opinions, interests and protests which otherwise would remain concealed. Some of this literature has inspired the lives of people for better or for worse. When Ahmad Shawkat visits the office of the *New Man* magazine, after telling Adli Karim about his intention to study arts at university level, the latter remarks, "Literature is one of the greatest tools of liberation" (Mahfouz, 1957:1072). Adli's advice, however, is that literature must also be approached scientifically to give it more depth in its interpretation. Hence he urges Ahmad that, "in addition to Shakespeare and Schopenhauer, [his] library must contain Comte, Darwin, Freud, Marks and Engels" (Mahfouz, 1957:1073), men who have made immense contributions to the body of knowledge. When Ahmad is employed as a journalist, Sawsan also informs him that:

Writing should be an instrument with a clearly defined purpose. Its ultimate goal should be the development of this world and man's ascent up the ladder of progress and liberation. The human race is engaged in constant struggle. A writer truly worthy of the name must be at the head of the freedom fighters (Mahfouz, 1957:1190).

Besides advancing the survival of living human kind, Sawsan believes literature can help liberate man from socio-economic, political and cultural bondages. Owing to this conviction, when she gets married to Ahmad, she helps him with the distribution of literature that targets the proletariat. As she informs Idli Karim, "My husband gives talks to workers in dilapidated and out-of-the-way buildings, and I never tire of handing out pamphlets" (Mahfouz, 1957:1279). She is convinced that the only way to liberate Egypt is not only through political rallies and campaigns that are done by her husband, but through Marxist literature as well. The Muslim Brotherhood also intends

to liberate all Muslim countries by intensifying the teachings of the Qu'ran. When Zaghul and his colleagues could not be given a hearing at the Peace Conference, he appealed to renowned authors in America and other countries to use literature to persuade Britain to free Egypt.

Maxist literary criticism postulates that literature itself is a social institution and has a specific ideological function, based on the background and ideology of the author.

In conclusion, while Mahfouz has endeavoured to capture the Egyptian life-style in the old Cairo in this family saga, he also has not failed to capture the spirit, the vision and desire to change. No matter how difficult the struggle, or how long it takes, once the wind of change has come to a people, nobody can stand in its way. It cannot be denied that when *The Cairo Trilogy* ends, the Egyptian people have not been liberated as yet, but the struggle for liberation has not ceased. Noticeably as well is that the Egyptians' struggle is not limited to politics - they want a visible transformation of their socio-economic and cultural structures as well.

The next chapter will be looking at the myths in Ngugi's works focusing on how they influence change amongst the Kenyans.

CHAPTER 3: NGUGI WA THIONG'O

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on Ngugi's five novels and how they deal with the liberation myth during the colonial period as well as post-independence neo-colonialism. *The River Between* (1965) is mainly about the strained relationship between two villages, Kameno and Makuyu with Kameno representing traditional African beliefs and Makuyu Christianity. In this novel, a mission-educated character, Waiyaki, tries unsuccessfully to synthesize the Christian worldview with the Kikuyu, even as he comes to understand the dynamic encounter of two completely divergent cultures. *Weep Not, Child* (1964) mainly deals with the Mau Mau uprising and the bewildering dispossession of the Kenyans from their ancestral land while *A Grain of Wheat* (1967) celebrates Kenya's independence. *Petals of Blood* (1977), *Devil on the Cross* (1982) and *Matigari* (1989) attest to the exploitation of peasants and workers by foreign business interests and a greedy indigenous bourgeoisie in post colonial Kenya.

3.2 The Kikuyu Myth

The Kenyan myth is based on the belief that Kenya as a country was specially created for them and for no one else. They believe they have to retain their identity without interference by other nationalities, as Ngugi relates the general understanding of the myth in *Weep Not, Child*:

And the Creator who is also called Murungu took Gikuyu and Mumbi from his holy mountain. He took them to the country of ridges near Siriana and there stood them on a big ridge before he finally took them to Mukuruwe wa Gathanga. But he had shown them the land - yes, God showed Gikuyu and Mumbi all the land and told them, "This land I hand over to you. O man and woman. It's yours to rule and till in serenity sacrificing only to me, your God under my secret tree" (Ngugi, 1964:24).

Gikuyu and Mumbi are mythical founders of the Kikuyu tribe. Barnett and Njama (1966:494) claim it is "a term also used for the underground movement by its members". Nevertheless, Ngugi makes this myth run like a thread through his earlier

texts in which Kenyan identity is measured by landownership as Ogude (1999:47) asserts that “the myth of creation which legitimizes the claim to landownership by turning it into a covenant between man and his creators transforms this land into an inviolable and living entity”. No wonder that during the strike in *Weep Not, Child*, Kiarie, one of the speakers from Nairobi, recounts in a low, sad voice the Kenyan history to the crowd by relating to them that:

All the land belonged to the people - black people. They had been given it by God. For every race had their country. The Indians had India. The Europeans had Europe. And Africans had Africa, the land of the black people. (*Applause*). Who did not know that all the soil in this part of the country had been given to Gikuyu and Mumbi and their posterity? (*More applause*) (Ngugi, 1964:57).

Kanogo (1987:150-151) too asserts that the custodianship of Kikuyu land is “emphasized in the various Mau Mau songs and prayer forms, which stress that Kikuyu claims to the lost lands date back to antiquity, having originally been bequeathed to them by God as the following song demonstrates:

Gikuyu was told by Murungu
'Do you see all this land?
I want you and your children's
Children to dwell in it for ever.'
Even if you oppress us
This country belongs to us
We were given it by Murungu
And we shall never abandon it.
Mwene Nyaga in the millions of it
We will drive the foreigners out of the country
And we the African people,
Will remain triumphant
Since this is our country.

3.3 Factors Behind the Kenyan Liberation Myth

Land Alienation was one of the major causes of the liberation myth in Kenya. When the Europeans were encouraged to come and farm in Kenya, land was made available to them as it could easily be alienated from the Kikuyu for white settlers' use. Unfortunately, besides the waste unoccupied land, the settlers also showed

preference for land that had already been occupied or cultivated. Kanogo (1987:9-10) mentions that:

Administrative officers entrusted with the task of processing European application for land usually gave settlers immediate authority to occupy land, with the only condition being that they pay the Kikuyu owners a meager three rupees per acre compensation for their loss of rights. By 1933, 109,5 square miles of potentially highly valuable Kikuyu land had been alienated for European settlement.

Kanogo's claim is also supported by Ochieng' (1985:105) who asserts that "between 1905 and 1914 nearly 5 million acres of land was taken from the Kenya Africans. And so it went on, and on, until about half the land in Kenya that was worth cultivating was in the hands of the whites." In actual fact these were forced removals perpetrated by racial divisions intended to appropriate the fertile areas to the white settlers. Land is of such value here that one can hardly survive without it. Little wonder then that even a boy such as Njoroge in *Weep Not, Child*, concludes when he compares his *muhoi*, (someone who uses land, but is not a member of the descent group who hold rights in the land) father, Ngotho, to Nganga, the village carpenter:

Nganga was rich. He had land. Any man who had land was considered rich. If a man had plenty of money, many motor cars, but no land, he could never be counted rich. A man who went with tattered clothes but had at least an acre of red earth was better off than the man with money" (Ngugi 1964:19).

After Kenyatta lost the Kapengira case, Ngotho's hope of getting his ancestors' land back is dashed as he reveals, "And yet he felt the loss of the land even more keenly than Boro, for to him it was a spiritual loss. When a man was severed from the land of his ancestors where would he sacrifice to the Creator? How could he come into contact with the founder of the tribe, Gikuyu and Mumbi?" (Ngugi, 1964:74). Ngotho's concern is serious when one looks at the fact that in the past African people used to bury their dead next to their homesteads, and not in graveyards as the custom is today. It was also a custom to sacrifice by the ancestors' graves. If Ngotho cannot get his ancestors' land back and be next to the graves of his ancestors, he has also been disconnected from his Creator. Hence his trepidation about the "ancient rites, the spirits of the ancestors" (Ngugi, 1964:*Ibid*). In *The River Between* the random

and wholesale alienation of Kikuyu land rendering them landless, is articulated by an elder at a Kiama meeting when he mentions, “Our land is gone slowly, taken from us, while we and our young men sit like women, watching” (Ngugi, 1965:128).

In *A Grain of Wheat* Wambuku’s love relationship with Kihika fails to be consummated because Kihika’s dream is the reoccupation of the land grabbed from black people. Wambuku gets so frustrated that she “saw it as a demon pulling him away from her. If only she understood it, if only she came face to face with the demon, then she would know how to fight with her woman’s strength. Had the demon not assumed the rival woman to her?” (Ngugi, 1967:85). Wambuku’s interpretation that Kihika is demon possessed shows the agony of seeing black people’s land taken away from them and the intensity of the liberation myth in Kihika. Hence, when Wambuku accuses him of being ever thinking about politics, the following conversation ensues:

“It is not politics, Wambuku,” he said, “it is life. Is he a man who lets another take away his land and freedom? Has a slave life?” ...

“You have got land, Kihika. Mbungua’s land is also yours. In any case, the land in the Rift Valley did not belong to our tribe?”

“My father’s ten acres? That is not the important thing. Kenya belongs to the black people. Can’t you see that Cain was wrong? I am my brother’s keeper. In any case, whether the land was stolen from Gikuyu, Urabi or Nandi, it does not belong to the white man. And even if it did, shouldn’t everybody have a share in the common shamba, our Kenya? Take your white man, anywhere, in the settled area. He owns hundreds and hundreds of acres of land. What about the black men who squat there, who sweat dry on the farms to grow coffee, tea, sisal, wheat and yet only get ten shillings a month?” (Ngugi, 1967:85).

In accord with Kihika’s argument is Brown’s (1988:1) precise observation:

Linked with the loss of land was the loss of economic independence. When a man could not farm his own land, he would have to serve someone else; either farming their land or working in the British settlements. This amounted to little more than serfdom, for there was a clear double standard. The Kenyan natives would only get one fifth the compensation the settlers got (on the average) for the same amount of work. Under such hardships, it was only a matter of time before the natives revolted.

Gikonyo, the carpenter, sings while busy in his workshop to the delight of everyone listening. However, with time his voice changes as the reader is told, "Soon, however, Wangari and Mumbi, like other women in Thabai, noticed a change in the man. He now sang with defiance, carelessly flinging an open challenge to those beyond Thabai, to the white man in Nairobi and any other places where Gikuyu ancestors used to dwell. The British government had created African Reserves for all the Kenyans removed from the so-called 'White Highlands' (Ngugi, 1967:87). Anderson (2005:21) furthermore mentions that "the legal designation of the White Highland as being for European ownership prevented Africans from acquiring lands outside their own designated reserves, while it gave the existing European settlers far greater security of tenure".

It should be noted that as Kihika states in his protest for liberation, when the Kenyan masses were moved to the reserves, some were urged to stay on the farms as squatters who should supply labour to the white settlers. Some of these squatters were the original owners of the farms. This meant that the Kenyans who chose to remain on their ancestral lands were overnight transformed from the position of landownership to being squatters. Kenyatta in *Facing Mount Kenya* (1938:12) elaborates on the importance of land tenure among the Kikuyu people:

The Gikuyu consider the earth as the "mother" of the tribe, for the reason that the mother bears her burden for about eight or nine moons while the child is in her womb, and then for a short period of suckling. But it is the soil that feeds the child through life-time; and again after death it is the soil that nurses the spirits of the dead for eternity. Thus the earth is the most sacred thing above all that dwell in or on it. Among the Gikuyu the soil is especially honoured, and an everlasting oath is to swear by the earth.

This accounts for Kihika's bitterness and anger at the party meeting held at Rung'e Market when he addresses the masses:

We went to their church. Mubia, in white robes opened the bible. He said let us kneel down to pray. We knelt down. Mubia said: let us shut our eyes. We did. You know, his remained open so that he could read the word. When we opened our eyes our land was gone and the sword of flames stood on guard. As for Mubia, he went on reading the word, beseeching us to lay our treasures in heaven where no moth would corrupt them. But he laid his on earth, our earth (Ngugi, 1967:15).

The first ironical statement in the above extract is that the white man is dressed in white, a symbol of purity and innocence, yet what he does to the black people is evil. Secondly the white man uses the Bible to rob and grab land from the rightful owners. The white man preaches to the black man to be righteous while he is just as sinful. The process of land alienation had bred resentment towards the Europeans and the Kenyans wished them away. Kinuthia, one of Waiyaki's assistant teachers at Marioshoni School, informs his colleagues, "It is bad. It is bad. I say the white man should go, go back to wherever he came from and leave us to till our land in peace" (Ngugi, 1965:62), an articulation of the Kenyan myth of liberation.

The Kikuyu seriously wanted the land that had been taken away from them for European settlers to be returned to the rightful owners. As Fanon (1967:34) puts it, "for a colonized people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity". Ngugi expresses Kinuthia's wish for the settlers to leave Kenya as follows:

The political discussions held in the office were a sign of what was happening all over the ridges. There was indeed a growing need to do something. This feeling had been strengthened by this most recent alienation of land near Siriana forcing many people to move from places they had lived for ages, while others had to live on the same land, working for the new masters (Ngugi, 1965:62).

The "need to do something" is the desire to be liberated from the whites. In *Weep Not, Child*, Ngotho who now works as a *shamba* (a cultivated garden) boy on land which had previously belonged to his family, has chosen to remain here all his life, "under the belief that something big would happen. That is why he [does] not want to be away from the land that [had] belonged to his ancestors" (Ngugi, 1964:39). It is clear that Ngotho's desire is to see the whites leaving Kenya to its rightful owners. Ironically, Ngotho does not live long enough to witness his wish being fulfilled as he is brutally beaten to death by the enemy.

Labour recruitment strategies contributed to the liberation myth. It has already been mentioned that some of the Kenyan people who had lost their land to the white settlers had been urged to stay on the farms as squatters in order to provide cheap labour. The government also introduced various taxes such as poll and hut taxes to

force black people to go and seek employment on the white settlers' farms. Ngugi (1965:66) points out, "some people were already working on the alienated lands to get money for paying taxes". Most of the black people were discouraged from growing cash crops to prevent them from becoming self-sufficient and, therefore, forcing them to seek wage employment to meet their cash needs. To control the movement of labourers, an identification pass known as *kipande*, a combined identification and employment card which all African males over 16 years of age were obliged to carry, was also introduced. Failure to carry it along could lead to arrest and imprisonment. Kanogo (1987:38) remarks that

the *kipande* system was a vicious imposition on native labour. It made desertion very difficult, helped to keep the labourers' salaries static, and turned the labourer into a virtual prisoner until such time as his contract came to an end and he was discharged. Even then, the squatter stood few chances of getting a better paid job unless he risked destroying his identity card, along with the revealing information it contained.

The *kipande* was actually a curse to the Kenyan labourer, hence Kenyatta's (1938:212) reaction that the introduction of *kipande* with its diabolical system of finger prints "treated the Kenyan people as though they were criminals".

At the beginning the squatters were allowed to keep any number of livestock on the settlers' farms. They were also allowed to cultivate a part of the settlers' lands for their own use. Maloba (1993:26) points out that this arrangement was in fact a scheme "advocated by the settler as an effective tool to induce labourers from the reserves to seek a livelihood on European farms". However, as time passed, these rights were curtailed. These restrictions frustrated the squatters whose day to day activities depended on the little money from the sale of their livestock and small field production. Besides, Anderson (2005:25) adds, the squatters "believed they had customary rights of ownership for their families and descendants, rights they termed *githaka*. In Kikuyu custom, *githaka* holders had full control over their land and could not normally be removed." *Githaka* is "land which belongs to a person or *mbari*" (Anderson, 2005:387). *Mbari* is "a traditional Kikuyu sub-clan; largest localized kinship unit; a landholding group ranging as high as 5,000 persons and comprised of the male descendants of a common ancestor, together with their wives and children

(Barnett and Njama 1966:498). However, this is not how the settlers interpreted the squatters' rights. The settlers believed the squatters were simply tenants at will and could as such be evicted at any time without the right to appeal. Waweru, (1988:3) mentions that, "according to a Crown Land Ordinance issued in 1902, Africans could only own five acres of land for one year on a temporary basis". It is, therefore, clear that the Kenyans were bitter about this treatment.

Concerning monthly wages the squatters were paid niggardly, Kanogo (1987:11) maintains that the average squatter's wage was "eight shillings for a 30-day ticket [although] it took an average of 45 days, much longer in some cases to complete a ticket". Ngugi (1972:48) recalls how he worked on the European farms for peanuts:

I worked there sometimes, digging the ground, tending the settlers' crops and this for less than ten shillings. Every morning African workers would stream across the valley to sell their sweat for such a meagre sum of money, and at the end of the week or month they would give it all to the Indian trader who owned most of the shops in our area for a pound of sugar, maize flour, or grains, thankful that this would silence the children's clamour for a few days. These workers were the creators of wealth but they never benefited from it: the products of their collective sweat went to feed and clothe the children of the Indian trader, and those of the European settlers not only in our country but even those in England. I was living in a village and also in a colonial situation.

The restriction of the squatters' livestock, cultivation, and the taxes they had to pay while earning so little, indicate that they were clearly under pressure and had no option but to harbour rancorous feelings towards the colonizers' destruction of their myth of Kenyan landownership.

Another factor that contributed to the liberation myth in Kenya was the repatriation of squatters to the Rift Valley which did not bode well for the Kenyans. It should be noted that the squatters were unfortunately only tolerated by the settlers when it was profitable and necessary, hence, following the Resident Labourers Ordinance, the government made a decision to repatriate undesirable squatters to the reserves. As the settlers needed more land to increase their profits and had nowhere else to go, the only option left was to evict the squatters. Moreover, owing to the good profits they were making, the settlers mechanized their farms, resulting in the reduction of

massive manual labour. More land was also needed to settle white ex-soldiers after World War 1. In *Weep Not, Child*, Ngugi records that even ex-soldiers from World War 1 needed land for their settlement. This need is addressed when Kiarie addresses the strikers in *Weep Not, Child*, and declares, “later our fathers were taken captives in the first Big War to help in a war whose cause they never knew. And when they came back? Their land had been taken away for settlement of the white soldiers” (Ngugi, 1964:57). Before World War 1 these people had homes as well as plenty of land to cultivate. After the war they found themselves with nothing they could call their own. The same applied to some of the people who had moved to the White Highlands in search of new employment opportunities. On coming back they found that their lands had been given to other people. This is in itself enough reason for disgruntlement and, therefore, ground for the liberation myth to be practised.

There was also the issue of the population explosion resulting in a high demand for food. This “led to extensive cultivation even of areas previously reserved for grazing or generally held to be unsuitable for cultivation [which] led to extensive soil erosion, reducing even further the amount of land available for cultivation” (Maloba, 1993:30). Consequently, the decision to repatriate the squatters was a disaster, which intensified feelings of hatred towards the settlers and the government. To make matters worse, Ngugi (1963:69-70) reveals that

[the squatters] were not allowed to take their cattle or sheep and goats with them, nor were they allowed to wait to harvest the maize which they had planted. The Labour Department would sell both stock and crops and forward the proceeds to their new District Commissioners for distribution to them ‘in due course’.

It is well-known that African economy hinges on both crop and stock farming which implies that once an African is stripped of these commodities his livelihood is also destroyed. So, by evicting them without any means of living was a real problem and, therefore, a good base for the Kenyans to seek ways to liberate themselves.

The conduct of the government appointed chiefs in Kenya also contributed to the dream for liberation. In *A Grain of Wheat* in order to prevent all forms of communication between the Mau Mau guerrillas and the civilians the government

introduces the villagization programme. The digging of the trench around the village becomes a forced communal labour and it is the responsibility of the chiefs and homeguards who have to see that this work is done. In turn the chiefs become callous to their people as recounted by Mumbi who tells Mugo, "After you were taken away, beating was not isolated to one person here, another one there. Soldiers and homeguards entered the trench and beat anybody who raised their back or slowed down in any way" (Ngugi, 1967:125-6). Although both invalid people and children do not dig they are forced to sit around the trench "to watch their wives and sons and daughters or mothers work and bear the whip" (Ngugi, 1967:127). People literally die from these beatings. It is obvious that the Kenyans were forced to take decisive actions to liberate themselves from this brutality. Mumbi in addition mentions that, "Chief Muruithia, in charge of this area, was known everywhere for his cruelty. He was especially harsh to those Gikuyu squatters repatriated to the Gikuyu Reserves from the Rift Valley Province, from Uganda and from Tanganyika" (Ngugi, 1967:129). Subsequent to Chief Muruithia's unkind behaviour, people react by assassinating him. When Karanja succeeds, he becomes more cunning:

Soon he (Karanja) 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 detention camps. He became very strict with curfew laws and forced communal work (Ngugi, 1967:129).

The historian Throup (1988:144) records that between the outbreak of World War I and the end of the World War II "Kikuyu chiefs controlled the rewards of government patronage in the reserves through the local native councils". Jacobo in *Weep Not, Child* has been helped by Howlands "to get permission to grow pyrethrum" (Ngugi, 1964:78), a crop exclusively reserved for white farmers. The colonial government gave grants for ploughs, and various seeds which were in the allocation of some of the chiefs' control. Frequently the chiefs enriched themselves and their supporters, a practice which aroused resentment among the prospective farmers, traders opposed to the chiefs, and the retuning *askari* (soldier or policeman), who could not get trading licenses or permits. Some of these disgruntled individuals, became political activists, and as Throup (1988:144) puts it, "these

ambitious outsiders emerged as the leaders of the Kikuyu Central Association and challenged the chiefs' monopoly of power and rewards".

Another government scheme that further alienated the chiefs from their subjects was the agricultural betterment campaign and soil terracing. The chiefs, especially the newly-appointed ones, had to use propaganda and force to compel the subjects to dig the terraces in order to impress the white officials and retain their positions or face expulsion. Throup (1988:156) asserts, "the chiefs and elders were convinced that their continuation in office depended upon the progress made with terracing and that the administration would turn a blind eye as to how exactly it was achieved". The practice, nonetheless, exposed these chiefs to their political opponents. Throup (1988:151) furthermore remarks that "the first resistance came from former soldiers who objected to communal labour and stopped their wives digging terraces". Through the vernacular press this campaign spread fast and wide and when the government attempted to enforce the terracing, there was violence. The chiefs retaliated to this revolt by prosecuting innocent people, an act which only provoked violence as "agricultural officers were now assaulted, terraces knocked down and destroyed, and the chiefs and their headmen subjected to public ridicule and harassment" (Anderson, 2005:34). These activities are a signal of the desire, the yearning of the Kenyan people for liberation from colonial rule. Such chiefs became targets of assassination, as a form of protest against the perverse activities as well as the oppressive colonial government.

Government treatment of the African *Askari* or Forty Group was also a factor to strengthen the Kenyan liberation myth. When World War 11 came to an end the British government had planned to settle the white ex-soldiers by giving them farms and financial assistance. However, there were no plans for the African *askaris*. This is confirmed by Maloba (1993:36) who asserts that "there were no official plans to settle them on any prime agricultural land or even to offer them key technical or capital aid in their commercial enterprise".

It should be noted that during the war these soldiers had been earning some wages, although much lower than white soldiers' pay, which the *askaris* were ready to invest in small businesses and trade. Ochieng` (1985:124) states:

A large number of men had learnt trade that would be applicable to civilian life: there were carpenters, cooks, mechanics, telegraphers, and many more. In addition, the British had continually promised the African soldiers loans to start businesses, and there was always the hope of further education after they were discharged.

The soldiers, therefore, had high hopes for a better life but found their ambitions thwarted. Since the chiefs were in control of government patronage, the *askaris* were not given licenses for trading or permits for shops as they were given to the chiefs' family members and supporters. When the *askaris*' aspirations could not come to fruition, they became disillusioned. Ngotho himself is extremely displeased about the way the British colonisers have treated the *askaris* after World War 1 as he tells the reader, "The war ended. We were all tired. We came home worn out but very ready for whatever the British might give us as a reward. But, more than this, we wanted to go back to the soil and court it to yield, to create, not to destroy. But Ng'o! The land was gone. My father and many others had been moved from our ancestral lands." Maloba (1993:36) states that, "the result was that many of them were frustrated and embittered, feeling betrayed by a government and a system which had only recently valued their courageous contribution to the war effort". This bitterness is well articulated in *Weep Not, Child* as Ngugi tells us:

Boro thought of his father who had fought in the war only to be dispossessed. He too had gone to war, against Hitler. He had gone to Egypt, Jerusalem and Burma. He had seen things. When the war came to an end, Boro had come home, no longer a boy but a man with experience and ideas, only to find that for him there was to be no employment. There was no land on which he could settle, even if he had been able to do so. As he listened to this story all these things came into his mind with a growing anger. How could these people have let the white man occupy the land without acting? And what was all this superstitious belief in a prophecy?

In a whisper that sounded like a shout, he said, 'To hell with the prophecy.' To his father, he said, 'How can you continue working for a man who has taken your land? How can you go on serving him?' He walked out, without waiting for an answer (Ngugi, 1964: 26-27).

It is evident that Boro, Ngotho's son, is annoyed with the way the British government dumped the ex-soldiers without providing for them. His anger is also directed at his father's passive and patient belief in the old prophesy pertaining the promised land. As Ogude (1999:48) puts it, "Boro's disenchantment with the elders and his father in

particular is because they cannot fight for the restoration of the land.” Certainly, this could not make any sense unless they took action to liberate themselves from white colonial rule. Out of frustration many of the *askaris* found themselves drifting around the streets in Nairobi unemployed. Consequently, as Anderson, (2005:36) puts it, “the ex-service men of the Forty Group were first drawn into crime and then into political activities in which crime might play a part”. In *Moving the Centre*, Ngugi (1993:138) remarks that

Among these settlers were those soldiers who had fought in the First and Second World War. But the Kenyan Africans who had been active in the same wars were part of the landless and jobless majority in the cities and rural areas. The white soldiers were the beneficiaries of British colonial presence. The African soldiers rejected their destiny as hewers of wood and joined the Mau Mau guerrilla army.

Although Boro and his colleague Kori are in the rural area, they have connections with other *askari* in Nairobi who visit Boro over weekends to plan and disseminate information as evinced in the following extract:

Kori and Boro too brought men at week-ends, but these men were different from the young men of the village. The young men of the village usually allowed the elders to lead talks while they listened. But these others who came with Kori and Boro from the big city seemed to know a lot of things. They usually dominated the talks. And because most of them had been to the war, they were able to compare the affairs of the land with the lands to which they had been. They did not joke and laugh as young men usually did, but their faces were grave, as they talked of foreign lands, the war, their country, the big unemployment and the stolen lands (Ngugi, 1964:50).

While abroad, these *askaris* shared experiences with soldiers from different countries. Ochieng’ (1985:130) states that, “these soldiers had travelled widely and seen European weaknesses. Some like Bildad Kaggia, had found acceptance abroad and could no longer accept the belief that *Mzungu* was better than an African.” This is evident in *Weep Not, Child* (Ngugi, 1964:9-10) when the barber recounts his reminiscences of the World War 11 to his customers:

“But this one, we carried guns and we shot white men.”

“White men?”

“Y-e-e-e-s. They are not the gods we had thought them to be. We even slept with their women.”

“Ha! How are they -?”

“Not different. Not different. I like a good fleshy black body with sweat. But they are ... you know ... so thin ... without flesh ... nothing.”

“But it was wonderful to ...”

“Well before you started ... you thought ... it was eh-eh-wonderful. But after ... it was nothing. And you had to pay some money.”

“Are there -?”

“Many! Many who were willing to sell. And that was in Jerusalem of all places.”

The fact that African soldiers have had a chance of seeing the weaknesses of white soldiers during the war, and had a chance of having sexual intercourse with white women (something they never thought would happen in their lifetime), and discovered that white women are no different from black women in bed, except that they are thinner, makes them (the African soldiers) realize their sameness to the white man and, therefore, wonder why they should not be treated as equals. Moreover, as Nicholls (2005:85) observes,

she (the white woman) permits the colonised to transcend or transgress the rigidly hierarchical society in colonised Kenya. Significantly, this act takes place outside of colonised space in Jerusalem, an important geographical locus in the Christian religion. Of course, Jerusalem's significance in Christian mythology is that the Messiah was crucified there.

Fanon (1967:35) actually believes that the revolutionary spirit stems from the discovery made by the colonized that the settlers' skin is not of any more value than his, and cannot understand why they have to go on living in oppression. Ochieng' (1985:125) furthermore states that, “the war had transformed the African into the potent military force. They could now fire rifles and Bren guns: they had learnt jungle warfare and small-unit tactics.” The *askaris* could, therefore, become a potentially dangerous group since their expectations were not in least met.

Racial discrimination was another root cause for the struggle for liberation. Magubane (2007:29) quotes Jean Finot who defines racism as follows:

The science of inequality is emphatically a science of white people. It is they who have invented it and set it going, who have maintained, cherished, and propagated it, thanks to their observation and their deductions. Deeming themselves greater than men of other colours,

they have elevated into superior qualities all the traits which are peculiar to themselves, commencing with whiteness of the skin and the pliancy of the hair. But nothing proves that these vaunted traits are traits of real superiority.

The problem of race has seen nearly all the people of colour being subjected to numerous forms of human exploitation, ranging from the trade in African slaves for ready-made labour in various plantations in Europe and America to forcing African workers to literally eat food urinated on by white students at the University of Free State in Bloemfontein in 2007. This incident proves that racism is still active in South Africa in spite of seventeen years of democracy. Soyinka (1976:127), in analysing how negritude originated, poses what he calls “a pair of syllogisms from the racist philosophy”:

- (a) Analytical thought is a mark of high human development. The European employs analytical thought. Therefore the European is highly developed.
- (b) Analytical thought is a mark of high human development. The African is incapable of analytical thought. Therefore the African is not highly developed.

While this argument is just myth, it became the base for racial discrimination. Racial discrimination in Kenya also contributed to the Mau Mau revolt. As Powers (2002:2) puts it:

Class structures were equal to land as one of the grievances leading to the revolt. Europeans, who made up less than 1% of the total population, constituted a “high caste”. They monopolized the local government with the colour bar that led to apartheid policies similar to those in South Africa. Indians and Asians were staggered in the caste system, lower than Europeans but higher than Africans. The Africans were at the bottom of the caste system.

The Europeans, who were occupying the stratum of the caste, regarded themselves as more superior and, therefore, as better than the other races, a myth which is the root cause of racial tensions and misunderstandings. For instance, in *Weep Not, Child*, though the headmaster at Siriana Secondary School is a strict disciplinarian who treats everyone, black and white alike, the reader is told:

But he believed that the best, the really excellent could only come from the white man. He brought up his boys to copy and cherish the white

man's civilization as the only hope of mankind and especially of the black races. He was automatically against all black politicians who in a way made people to be discontented with the white man's rule and civilizing mission (Ngugi, 1964:115).

The headmaster is both pessimistic about and prejudiced against black people and actually perpetuates the myth that black people are savages. In *Petals of Blood* (1977:29) Cambridge Fraudsham is already prejudiced against African children when he arrives at the school as revealed in his address to them:

Now, my boys, trousers are quite out of the question in the tropics. He sketched a profile of an imaginary thick-lipped African in a grey woollen suit, a sun-helmet, a white starched stiff collar and tie, and laughed contemptuously: Don't emulate this man. There was to be no rice in our meals: the school did not want to turn out men who would want to live beyond their means. And no shoes, my boys, except on the day of worship: the school did not want to turn out black Europeans but true Africans who would not look down upon the innocence and simple ways of their ancestors. At the same time we had to grow strong in God and the Empire. It was the two that had rid the world of the menace of Hitler.

Fraudsham indoctrinates these children to believe that they can never rise to the level where eating rice and wearing decent clothes can be part and parcel of their daily lives. It is amazing that Fraudsham expects the children to transform one side of their lives at the expense of the other. The British Empire, because it is the best and the only best, should be revered in the same way as God. In *A Grain of Wheat* both John and Margery Thompson at the Githima Forestry Research Station are possessed with the same complex as the headmaster at Siriana Secondary School. For instance, when John looks at the neatly arranged test-tubes in the chemistry building, he contemplates that after his departure when the black people have taken over, nothing will ever be the same. When Margery looks at the immaculate flower garden around their house, she is filled with nausea at the possibility that those flowers might mean nothing to her successor. In the words of Fanon (1963:32):

The native is declared insensible to ethics; he represents not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values. He is the enemy of values, and in this sense he is the absolute evil. He is the corrosive element, destroying all that comes near him; he is the deforming element, disfiguring all that has to do with beauty or morality; he is the depository of maleficent powers, the unconscious and irretrievable

instrument of blind forces. All values, in fact, are irrevocably poisoned and diseased as soon as [they] are allowed in contact with the colonized race.

On the eve of their departure to England, John Thompson, in *A Grain of Wheat*, is still overwhelmed by the myth of white superiority. This is evidenced when he comes to the ridiculous conclusion revealed in the following conversation:

“Perhaps this is not the journey’s end,” he said at last.

“What?”

“We are not yet beaten,” he asserted hoarsely.

“Africa cannot, cannot do without Europe” (Ngugi, 1967:144).

It is evident that he believes in white superiority *non pareil* and that black people are lazy, stupid, sub-human, and that they cannot think. Mwaura informs Karanja that he once worked with a white man in Nairobi who, when he left Kenya “he at least shot dead all his pets – cats and dogs. Couldn’t bear to leave them alive without a kindly helper” (Ngugi, 1967:141). White people do not believe that black people can look after animals. Mboya (1963:64) adds that “to foster this spirit of inferiority among Africans, the administration had identified everything good with the Europeans and everything bad or inferior with the African”.

The issue of racism in Kenya is further encapsulated by Mboya (1963:47) who asserts that the Mau Mau was the result of both economic and social problems which could not be solved through the constitution. Amongst social problems he states that

They were nearly all problems of discrimination against Africans in different forms; discrimination in employment and in salaries (I had myself been paid only one-fifth of the salary of a European doing the same job); refusal by government to let Africans grow cash crops like coffee, tea, sisal and pyrethrum; discrimination in post offices, hotels and restaurant supported by a government which had made liquor laws laying down as an offence the selling or serving to an African of European liquor; discrimination by government in giving aid to schools and hospitals established on racial basis; the absence of African representation in the Legislature or of any voice at all in the government.

Maloba (1998:55) in addition alleges:

Official or not, racism and the colour-bar were cornerstones of official agenda in colonial Kenya. The thing that reminded Africans everyday that they were colonized was their harsh discriminatory treatment under whites. They were mistreated, shouted at, beaten, sneered at, ridiculed, derogatorily described, and reminded often that they were inferior to whites in their own country.

In *Weep Not, Child*, Ngugi expresses the stark and painful reality of racism through the young and innocent mind of Njoroge:

Njoroge had heard about the colour-bar from his brothers in Nairobi. He did not know what it was really. But he knew that the strike had failed because of the colour-bar. Black people had no land because of the colour-bar and they could not eat in hotels because of the colour-bar. Colour-bar was everywhere. Rich Africans could also practice colour-bar on the poorer Africans (Ngugi, 1964:64).

After the strike referred to in the foregoing passage, Njoroge recalls a meeting arranged in the market place by KAU which wanted “the return of the stolen lands, bigger salaries for black people and the abolition of colour-bar” (Ngugi, 1964:64). The Kenyan people did not believe in the inferior status imposed on them by the British. They had a dream of liberating themselves from the dehumanizing condition, hence the aforementioned meeting. Anderson (2005:182-83) avers that residential areas were also divided on the basis of racism as he describes the Eastlands:

Squalid and crime-infested, Eastlands was for Africans. It had been this way since the 1900s. Africans were not welcome in other parts of the town, except as labour. They were not permitted in the bars or cafes of central Nairobi, and the vigilant Asian shop-owner in the business district would seldom allow an African to linger at the window, never mind enter the store. In deed, if not in law, Kenya’s colour bar was vigorously policed in the colony’s capital.

It is thus apparent that racism significantly contributed to the Kenyan people’s realization of the need to liberate themselves from their British masters.

3.4 En Route to Liberation

In Kenya resistance to British colonialism did not start with the Mau Mau movement. In *A Grain of Wheat* Ngugi cites one of the earliest resistance efforts around 1890 in which the colonial take-over was discontinued. It was when chief Waiyaki wa Henya,

alias Waiyaki wa Hinga, a Gikuyu pre-colonial chief who ruled around Dagoretti and signed a treaty with Frederick Lugard of the British East Africa Company who later pitched a tent at Dagoretti. Lugard and his men harassed the Gikuyu people and demanded their food and their women. In retaliation the Kikuyu burnt down Frederick Lugard's fort in 1890. However, in 1892 the colonial administration kidnapped Waiyaki wa Hinga and took him to the Coast where he is believed to have met his death. Ngugi elaborates on Waiyaki's resistance activities in his *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary*, (1981:45) in this fashion:

Waiyaki was one of several chiefs who were emerging towards feudal lordship status in Gikuyu land in the nineteenth century. But Waiyaki also loved his country. Combining political shrewdness and military brilliance, he and his army for many years successfully thwarted the British attempts at penetration and occupation of Dagoretti, Githiiga and Githuunguri, eventually overrunning fortifications at Kiawariua. The British were forced to evacuate but managed a safe retreat through the guidance of the treacherous Kinyaanjai wa Githirimu, later rewarded by being made a paramount chief. The British forces came back, in larger numbers, and built a bigger and stronger garrison, Fort Smith, at Kanyaariri near the present Kikuyu station. Fort Smith was immediately besieged by Waiyaki's army. The commanding officer, Purkiss, now resorted to that British treachery which would always prove fatal to many a trusting Kenyan nationalist. He invited Waiyaki to peace talks. Waiyaki was arrested inside Fort Smith on 14 August 1892. But, though now alone and surrounded by bayonets and maxim guns, Waiyaki went on resisting and even bloodied one of the European captors. On 17 August 1892 they sent him to detention at the coast. Thinking that no native from the interior would ever know the truth, they shot Waiyaki and buried him, still breathing, still alive, at Kibwezi. Waiyaki's detention and subsequent murder rekindled the fire of militant nationalism and resistance. His army regrouped and laid another siege of Fort Smith.

Waiyaki's resistance is an attestation that the Kikuyu people have for a long time tried to liberate themselves from colonialism. Nonetheless, being better armed, the British were by violent means able to force the Africans to give in. However, Waiyaki's revolutionary spirit was not buried with his body as we see it rekindled in people such as Harry Thuku who, as Anderson (2005:16) points out:

Thuku and his followers rejected colonial rule and overtly questioned the legitimacy of European domination. (He) stirred up trouble by touting the rural district at weekends, urging Africans to campaign against the *kipande*, and speaking forcefully against the exploitation of

African labourers, the levying of hut tax, and against the laws that prevented Africans from purchasing land.

Thuku was born in Kenya into the Kikuyu ethnic group, one of the groups that lost the largest part of the land to white settlers during the British takeover of Kenya. The action described in the foregoing extract is a protest against colonialism and a conspicuous hunger for liberation. Thus Ngugi in *A Grain of Wheat* (1967:13) equates Thuku to the Biblical Moses while the colonial regime is equated with the Egyptian Pharaoh. In 1921 Thuku founded the East African Association, the first multi-ethnic political organization in East Africa which campaigned against the *kipande* system of pass controls, and the forced labour of women and girls. He was arrested in connection with his political activities on 14 March 1922. His arrest brought about one of the biggest workers' protests and demonstrations around the Nairobi Police Station, demanding his release from detention as Warui claims:

The young should do for Jomo what we did for Harry. I've never seen anything to match the size of that line of men and women. We came from ridges here, ridges there, everyone. Most of us walked. Others did not bring food. We shared whatever crumbs we had brought. Great love I saw there. With our blood we wrote vows to free Harry (Ngugi, 1967:13).

It is estimated that between 7000 and 8000 people gathered to demand Harry's freedom. The police eventually opened fire, killing twenty-five people. Anderson (2005:17) adds that "unofficial reports from African staff in Nairobi mortuary put the number of dead at fifty-six". This was the first violent political strike in Kenya. Thuku was exiled to the Northern Frontier Province for eleven years and the EAA was dissolved. Unfortunately, after his release from detention, as Ngugi (1967:92) recounts, "he had come back a broken man, who promised eternal co-operation with his oppressors, denouncing the Party he had helped to build". Maloba (1998:50) confirms that when Thuku returned, "he had been converted in effect and became a staunch supporter of the government before and during the Mau Mau revolt". An internet article titled "Harry Thuku" also states that on 12 December 1952 he broadcast to the nation, proclaiming: "Today we, the Kikuyu, stand ashamed and looked upon as hopeless people in the eyes of other races and before the Government. Why? Because of the crimes perpetrated by Mau Mau and because the Kikuyu have made themselves Mau Mau" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_Thuku).

The workers' demonstrations were thus not only directed at the release of Thuku but also at the deliverance of the Kenyans themselves. The demonstrations were a confirmation of their yearning for liberation.

For the liberation struggle to make a meaningful mark and bring systematic order to the Kenyan people, there was the inception of the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) and the Kenya African Union (KAU). While Thuku was in detention his ideas were rejuvenated by the birth of a new political party, namely, Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) whose main focus was to regain the land lost to the British settlers. Later the issue of female circumcision also attracted its attention. Jomo Kenyatta, who became Kenya's first president, also joined the KCA and became Secretary General of the Association. It is undeniable that the KCA's ultimate dream was the liberation of the Kenyan people from colonial oppression. Unfortunately, the KCA was banned to be reborn as the Kenya African Union (KAU) with the objective of articulating Kenyan grievances against the British colonial administration. When Jomo Kenyatta became president of this organization comprised of both radical and moderate members, he had the task of reconciling the two groups. Ochieng' (1985:131) mentions the "Kaggias, Kubai's, Mathenge's, the Kimathi's and Odingas" as some of the radicals who "had no faith in reform and constitutionalism". Mathenge was a commander in the Mau Mau independence movement. He fled Kenya in 1956 after Dedan Kimathi, was captured and executed by the British colonial power. Odinga was one of the founder members of KANU in 1960 and was its vice-president. When Kenya became a republic, he was Kenyatta's first vice-president. These men became the architects behind the Mau Mau movement and they were desperate for self-determination.

Kenya also experienced a rise of militant trade unionism. Unions demonstrated their opposition to colonialism by striking. In *Weep Not, Child*, the reader comes across one such strike where Kiarie, one of the speakers from Nairobi, in a low, sad voice, recounts how they have been robbed of this treasure by the whites. He concludes by telling the workers:

God had now heard their cries and tribulations. There was a man sent from God whose name was Jomo. He was the Black Moses empowered by God to tell the white Pharaoh 'Let my people go!'.

‘And that’s what we have gathered here to tell the British. Today, we, with one voice, we must rise and shout: “The time has come. Let my people go. Let my people go! We want back our land! Now!” (*hysterical applause*) (Ngugi, 1964:58).

After reminding the people of their suffering at the hands of the British Government, Kiarie now raised his voice to a crescendo to inform the people of their urgent desire for liberation.

From 1947, as Anderson (2005:29) states, the party “encouraged the spreading of political oaths intended to bind Kikuyu people to political solidarity” thereby striving to revive the myth of landownership. In Kikuyu society taking an oath was not a new thing. Kenyatta (1938:223) asserts that an oath was the most essential element controlling court procedures. He mentions two purposes that an oath serves:

On the one hand, the fear of it prevented people from giving false evidence and helped to bring the offenders to justice through guilty conscience and confession. On the other hand, it ruled out bribery and corruption and ensured impartial or unbiased judgement.

Besides the court procedures referred to by Kenyatta, every African tribe has an oath for bringing together and solemnizing certain transactions. Ngotho, although refusing to take an oath at his son’s instruction, admits “Not that he objected to it in principle. After all, oath-taking as a means of binding a person to a promise was a normal feature of tribal life” (Ngugi, 1964:74). I have already indicated that the KAU organization consisted of both the moderates and radicals. Ochieng (1985:132) points out that

Some of the radicals, like Kaggia, Kubai, and Kimati, soon joined an underground movement which by 1951 was already binding a few of its selected members by oath against the British. Only people of proven sincerity, honesty and courage were admitted into this movement. They made secret plans for armed rebellion.

Robson (1987:86) holds a slightly different view about oath taking. He maintains that, “while there would always be those who would betray the revolution for the right price, the absence of educated political leaders necessitated the use of ceremonies and loyalties that the ordinary peasant understood”. Barnette and Njama (1966:68-69) cite one such oath called the Batuni or Warrior oath which the initiate had to

repeat after the initiator. For the purpose of this study on Kenyan myth, parts two, four, five and seven are important. They are as follows:

2. I speak the truth and swear before our *Ngai* (Kikuyu term for God) and before everyone present here
And before the children of *Gikuyu* and *Mumbi*
That I shall never betray our country
That I shall never betray a member of *Muingi* (the community) to our enemies
Whether they be European, Asian or African
And if I do this
May this oath kill me...
4. I speak the truth and swear before *Ngai* and before everyone present here
That if I am called upon to fight
Or kill the enemy I shall go,
Even if the enemy be my father or mother, my brother or sister.
And if I refuse
May this oath kill me...
5. I speak the truth and swear before *Ngai* and before everyone present here
That if the people of *Muingi* come by day or by night
And ask me to hide them
I shall do so and I shall help them.
And if I fail to do this
May this oath kill me...
7. I speak the truth and swear before *Ngai* and before everyone present here
And by this Batuni Oath of *Muingi*
That I shall never sell my country for money or any other thing
That I shall abide until my death by all the vows that I have made this day
That I shall never disclose our secrets to the enemy
Nor shall I disclose them to anyone not a member of *Muingi*
And if I break any of the vows that I have today consciously made
I will agree to any punishment that this society decides to give me
And if I fail to do these things
May this oath kill me...

This oath appears to be more serious, and once taken, one was not allowed to associate with or disclose the secrets of the Mau Mau movement to strangers or non-members. Hence, in *The River Between*, the Kiama become concerned about Waiyaki's frequent visits to Siriana as well as Joshua's church, as made evident in Kabonyi's accusations:

How many times have you been in Joshua's church? How many? No, wait, you have also been to Siriana. How many times? We know of two. You never told anybody that you were going there. Do you expect us to believe that you went to get teachers? Do you? You'll have to tell

us of any secret dealings between you, Joshua and Siriana. Will you sell us to the white man? You see how restless and impatient our people are. They cry for a leader to save them from slavery (Ngugi, 1965:126).

While Waiyaki is obsessed with the building of more schools, securing more teachers and improving the education of the children, the Kiama members are preoccupied with political freedom. Their suspicions about his visits to Siriana are aggravated by the fact that the school is in white territory and that he might betray them to the enemy. Likewise, his visits to Joshua's church cannot be a blessing to the Kiama since most churches support the Christian missions and the government. Ngugi (1967:191) remarks that, "Jackson had consistently preached against Mau Mau in churches and in public meetings convened by Tom Robson. He called on Christians to fight side by side with the whiteman, their brother in Christ, to restore order and the rule of the spirit." Kinyati (1991:26) points out that according to the imperialist and Christian school of thought, Mau Mau was:

- a barbarous and atavist organization
- an anti-white tribal cult whose leaders planned to turn Kenya into a land of darkness and death
- a product of primitive Gikuyu forest mentality
- primitive and a lunatic barbarism
- an advanced form of Gikuyu insanity
- anti-Christianity and anti-western civilization
- a product of the Gikuyu people's failures to adapt to the demands of western civilization
- a terrorist movement whose aim was the drinking of human blood
- a communist subversive movement.

It cannot be denied that the process of administering these oaths might have been ghastly and loathsome. An article from *Time Magazine* titled "The Oath Takers" acknowledges that the difficulty that the Mau Mau organizers faced in forging the nationalist spirit was obtaining the loyalty of their members, and proceeds to state that:

To achieve this, the Mau Mau leadership forced its recruits, voluntary or involuntary, to seal their oaths by digging up corpses and eating their putrefied flesh, copulating with sheep, dogs or adolescent girls, and by drinking the famed "Kaberichia cocktail" - a mixture of semen and menstrual blood. And when he was assigned to kill an enemy of

the movement, a sworn Mau Mau pledged himself to remove the eyeballs of his victim and drink the liquid from them.

This view is supported by Barnett and Njama (1966:126) who claim that, according to Kikuyu belief, “the more vile or repulsive were the acts performed while swearing an oath, the stronger and more binding did such an oath become”. However, Kariuki (1963:60) argues that these are mere fabrications because the “sacredness of menstrual blood is impressed on our young men and women at the time of circumcision”. What strikes one about these concoctions is that even young children are aware that one cannot become a Mau Mau member without taking one as Karanja in *Weep Not, Child* (Ngugi, 1964:72) tries to explain to Njoroge what Mau Mau is:

“What is Mau Mau?” Njoroge asked ...
Karanja, who had just joined the group, said, “It is a secret Kiama. You “drink” oath. You become a member. The Kiama has its own soldiers who are fighting for the land. Kimathi is the leader.

Whether these atrocities are true or not, the underlying objective was the attainment of their ideal. If these grisly acts were indeed performed, they were done in the name of the myth of liberation from colonialism. Besides, it also indicates that people can go to extremes for the sake of attaining their goals set by the myths they are trying to keep alive. Subsequently, despite the tortures at the detention camps, the reader is told, “the detainees of Yala held on to their vows. They would not say anything about the oath” (Ngugi, 1967:93). For the Mau Mau organisation to succeed a large number of people had to sacrifice their time and energy to ensure there were as many people as possible taking the oaths. For instance, Gatu “was a great oath administrator in Nyeri and travelled from village to village on foot” (Ngugi, 1967:*ibid*). Gatu took this trouble because “his faith lay in the Party; only through it could he see any prospect of independence and the return of the lost lands “ (Ngugi, 1967:*ibid*).

Consequently, the churches decided to act against the Mau Mau movement. Edgerton (1990:62) points out that on 22 August 1952, Kikuyu elders and ministers from both Catholic and Protestant churches met in Kiambu and adopted the following six resolutions:

- We will fight this secret and violent organization to the end; we see the way to achieve this is by all men and women of good will co-operating to work together for their just rights.

- As true Christians and members of God's family we will have nothing to do with, nor co-operate with Mau Mau because its teachings are contrary to Christian teachings and our customs.
- We are against it because it is against the Government which maintains the law and order of the country and thus our safety and happiness.
- We oppose Mau Mau if it is retarding the progress of Africans and also demoralizing them. It is also retarding the general progress of the country.
- We will exclude its followers from our churches and also expel their children from our schools, lest they infect the others.
- We do not fear Mau Mau at all. If the Government does not succeed in stamping out the organization we are prepared to fight Mau Mau adherents, even if it is with *pangas* (a long, curved knife, sharpened on the side).

The Kiama obviously knew about these resolutions, hence they could not understand Waiyaki's association with Joshua's church because of the stance the churches had taken against the movement. The churches, on the other hand, believed in the myth that Africans were savages, wild beasts of the forest who as Edgerton (1990:21) notes: "Well they haven't been out of the trees long enough."

For sheer commitment, unity to the struggle, and upliftment of the general morale of the populace the rallies and freedom songs were used as boosters. Words can be powerful weapons in situations of conflict. Commenting on the importance of rallies, Mboya (1963:63) contends:

[Rallies] are intended to have an impact both on the population and on the colonial power. They are intended to show the colonial power the strength and unity ('*umoja*') of the people and the leadership, and the unanimity of the people in their demand for Uhuru. And, among the people themselves, they are intended to show the strength of the leader and the complete loyalty of his followers, and to persuade the few who may doubt the rightness of the cause that after all everybody else believes in it. The rallies tackle the task of creating a sense of self-confidence, a feeling that it is not only right to fight for his independence but that it is possible to win his independence. Further, that it is not only right he should be free, but that he has a duty to free himself. The rallies are intended to create a revolutionary spirit, to wipe

away the acquiescence he has shown before and the obedience which was expected of him.

Kihika's speeches in *A Grain of Wheat* inflame the targeted people into action. For instance, on a political rally, he tells the crowd, "This is not 1920. What we now want is action, a blow which will tell" (Ngugi, 1967:14-15). These words literally provoke women from Thabai to pull at their clothes and hair, and to scream with delight, a manifestation of the effect that words can have on people. Furedi (1989:114) maintains that when around June 1952 Jomo Kenyatta together with prominent KAU members, toured the Highlands and addressed crowds of squatters he "told the crowds just what they wanted to hear and his militant speeches were received with great enthusiasm".

These political rallies at which political speeches were made, were accompanied by freedom songs which are also a vehicle for the myth of liberation. Edgerton (1990:117) mentions that the Kikuyu freedom songs

were filled with references to lost land and to past and present heroes, especially Kenyatta and Koinage. There were also continual refrains about pain and suffering, about the need for education, and the quest for freedom after the "Europeans" were driven out of Kenya. There were also repeated references to the many wrongs that the whites of Kenya had inflicted on Africans.

When Gikonyo's singing changes to signify the burning desire for liberation Ngugi (1967:87) remarks, "Karanja, Kihika and others joined Gikonyo and they sang sad songs of hope. They laughed and told stories, but their laughter was no longer the same; it carried mocking and expectation at the corners of their mouths." It is apparent that these young men's mood and aspiration is to see Kenya free from its oppressors. They used to go in large groups to the train station just to watch the train after which they would dance in the forest. However, as Ngugi (1967:*Ibid*) states, "the dance sessions in the forest turned into meetings where plans for the day of reckoning were drawn. They also met in huts, in dark places at night, and whispered together, later breaking into belligerent laughter and fighting songs."

The myth of the liberation of all African countries from colonialism is expressed in the following song, *Rwimbo Rwa Africa* (Song for Africa) quoted from Kinyatti (1991:34).

The song makes the Kenyan people realize that theirs is a national struggle since other countries before them had to embark on it to attain their freedom:

God gave to the Black people
This land of Africa
Praise *Mwene Nyaga*
For his blessing.

We will continue in our praises
of the land of Africa
From North to South.

After much suffering
The country of Egypt
Was delivered from bondage
And received its freedom.

Abyssinia (Ethiopia) was the light
Shining down from the North
Her people struggled mightily
And rescued themselves from the mire.

If you look around the whole of Kenya
It is only a river of blood
For we have one single purpose:
To lay hold of Kenya's freedom.

Listen to the painful sobbing
Of our brothers in South Africa
Where they are being oppressed
By the Boer oppressors.

We shall greatly rejoice
In the unity of all Black People
Let us create in our unity
A united states of all Africa.

The last two stanzas actually underline the important role of the freedom myth in the works of the three writers under discussion. Freedom songs were not confined to political rallies, but were sung in the forest to invigorate the forest fighters as well as in detention camps to ease the pain and to encourage the detainees to stand firm and focused. For instance, the following song, *Ndiri Na Kieha No Nguthi* (I Am Not Afraid I Must Go) has also been quoted by Kinyatti (1991:35). The song is meant to excite the guerrillas to fight the enemy with passion. The song also stresses the justice of the Mau Mau struggle:

When the enemy comes
I will not be afraid
I will wipe him out
Because I am fighting for justice.

In *A Grain of Wheat* Lieutenant Koinandu tells his colleagues gathered at Mugo's hut that as Mau Mau guerrillas in the forest, every evening after prayer, they also sang:

We shall never rest
Without land
Without Freedom true
Kenya is a country of black people (Ngugi, 1967:20).

The song was obviously intended to galvanize the freedom fighters and to remind them of their objective, their land which they had to get back from the colonizer.

3.5 The Armed Resistance and Government Reprisals in Kenya

With the assassination of Senior Chief Waruhiu wa Kungu on 20 October 1952 Governor Evelyn Baring was forced to declare a State of Emergency. This led to the arrest of KAU activists and suspected Mau Mau members by troops and police including Jomo Kenyatta and five others, the six leading Kenyans who would be known as the Kapenguria six among them. In *Weep Not, Child* every Kenyan citizen, driven by the liberation myth, wants Kenyatta to win the case and be released because his release symbolises the release of all Kenyans from the colonial imprisonment. Ngugi (1964:72) describes the people's mood as follows:

Everyone knew that Jomo would win. God would not let His people alone. The children of Israel must win. Many people put all their hopes on this eventual victory. If he lost, then the black people of Kenya had lost. Some of his lawyers had even come from England.

Much rain fell at Kipanga and the country around on the eve of the judgement day. People were happy in all the land. The rain was a good omen. Black folk were on trial. The Spirit of black folk from Demina Mathathi was on trial. Would it be victorious? It was the growing uncertainty of the answer that made people be afraid and assert more and more aggressively that a victory would surely follow.

It is apparent that the Kenyans are eager and apprehensive about this trial. They only want to see the release of Kenyatta, hence they liken themselves to the biblical Israelites in the hands of the Egyptians. To the frustration of everyone Jomo lost the

case, a setback encapsulated by Nguni as the reader is told, “To him, too, Jomo had been his hope. Nguni had come to think that it was Jomo who would drive away the white men. To him Jomo stood for custom and tradition purified by grace of learning and travel. But now he was defeated (Nguni, 1964:74).

However, a number of KAU members such as Dedan Kimathi who would spearhead the Mau Mau movement for almost six years managed to flee. Kimathi became a member of the Kenya African Union in 1946. He became radically political in 1950 and in 1952 he was briefly arrested but escaped with the help of the local police. This marked the beginning of his violent uprising as he formed the Kenya Defence Council to co-ordinate all forest fighters in 1953. However, in 1956, he was finally arrested with one of his wives, Wambui, and was sentenced to death by a court while he was in hospital and in February 1957 he was executed by the colonial government by hanging. Kimathi is viewed by many Kenyans as a national hero who sacrificed his life for the Kenyan myth of freedom and ownership of land. Boro and Kihika in *Weep Not, Child* and *A Grain of Wheat* are the epic heroes of this movement. It is mostly through them, though not exclusively, that the strengths and weaknesses of the organization are made vivid. Kihika is moved by the biblical story of Moses and the children of Israel and as Robson (1987:84) notes, “like the great prophet, he hopes to lead his people to the promised land”. Robson furthermore remarks that

[Kihika’s] eloquence makes people aware of their servitude, and inspires them to plunge into the struggle for freedom; it is his martyrdom which waters the tree of freedom, and keeps the struggle alive by infusing new life into the party, which finally leads to freedom (Robson, 1987:84).

It is unquestionable that the Mau Mau focus was on the oppressive white government as demonstrated in *Weep Not, Child* and *A Grain of Wheat*. The aforementioned two novels actually expose the heart of the Mau Mau struggle although the reader is allowed to witness only Howland’s and Robson’s deaths as representative of the deaths of the imperialists. Irumba (1980:215-216) argues that it is “because imperialism can only be destroyed by military collective action, [and Mau Mau’s] military action at this particular moment is not collective [and can], therefore, only attain this very limited result”. Friedman (2008:3) adds that, “they launched raids

on settlers' farms, post offices, police stations, and other Kikuyu perceived as being loyal to the regime". I, however, ascribe the limited success to the fact that the Mau Mau were not an organized army per se. In spite of this, as Anderson (2005:86) vouchsafes, their attacks "were well planned and efficiently executed". Besides, they had only a few weapons which were mostly home-made such as spears, pangas, arrows, knobkerries, and knives. As a result of this, the Mau Mau had no choice but to attack their enemy at close range. Anderson (2005:87) remarks that, "most victims died as a result of multiple blade wounds, the bodies being hacked and mutilated even after death". And to kill in this way obviously "required commitment and determination". In addition, Friedman(2008:5) states that in later years, "they attempted to make guns from old pipes, door bolts, wood, nails and elastic bands". It is, therefore, understandable why the Mau Mau insurgents could not fight against the better-armed British in the open battlefield. Of vital importance here is how strong a myth can be, especially if it is coupled with the desire for liberation. They knew they were not well armed, but they did not wait to have enough guns and bombs and all kinds of ammunition to attack the British.

Realizing that they had insufficient weapons to use against the enemy, they raided police stations. For instance, in *A Grain of Wheat*, Kihika and his men storm Mahee police garrison in the Rift Valley. After setting it alight "Kihika's men run back to the forest with fresh supplies of men, guns and ammunition to continue the war" (Ngugi, 1967:16). Such raids attest to the strong determination the Mau Mau movement had to liberate the Kenyan people. As a result of the scant supply of weapons the Mau Mau had to resort to guerrilla warfare and terrorism.

Although the Kenyan Mau Mau movement was aimed at the white settlers, it was also faced with its own people who were collaborating with the Government. Among these people were the government-appointed chiefs who had proved to be extremely oppressive to their own people, as well as Christians who had taken a stand against the Mau Mau movement. In both *A Grain of Wheat* and *Weep Not, Child* there are government loyalists who are eliminated for their stand against the Mau Mau movement. In *A Grain of Wheat* Reverend Jackson falls victim to the movement in the Rungei area:

Jackson had consistently preached against Mau Mau in churches and public meetings convened by Tom Robson. He called on Christians to fight side by side with the white man, their brother in Christ, to restore order and the rule of the spirit (Ngugi, 1967:191).

In *Weep Not, Child*, a chief is murdered in cold blood:

“Have you heard, brother?”

“No.”

“A chief has been killed.”

“Was he actually killed in daylight?”

“Yes. The men were very daring.”

“Tell us it all again.”

“Now, the chief was a big man with much land. The Governor had given it all to him, so he might sell the black people. The men were in a car. The chief was also in a car. The two men followed him all the way from Nairobi. When they reached the countryside, the men drove ahead and waved the chief to stop. He stopped. “Who’s the chief?” “I am.” “Then take that and that. And that too.” They shot him dead and drove away” (Ngugi, 1964:62-63).

The murder described above apparently refers to chief Waruhiu wa Kungu of the Kiambu district who was the government paramount chief for the Central Province and the senior African official under Kenya’s colonial administration. He was murdered on 7 October 1952. The issue of government loyalists continued to be a huge concern during the years of the state of emergency as evinced by extracts from letters written to colonial chiefs and headmen by Dedan Kimathi. These letters were compiled by Maina wa Kinyatti (1986:61-62). Extract one comes from the letter sent to chief Kabucho, dated 28 May 1954:

that if they [the chiefs] continue supporting the British in killing our people and destroying their property, I will order their extermination. It really makes my blood boil to see our own people supporting the British who have occupied our country and reduced us to slavery.

Let me emphasize this: If you want me to come to Kiambu, continue to suppress women and children. Can’t you understand that your support of the British is a betrayal of your own people? Why do you want to die as a traitor?

The freedom fighters found it difficult to understand why their own people were collaborating with the British against their black brothers. Hence General R in his Uhuru speech explains that they killed the loyalists, “because, inside, they were white

men” (Ngugi, 1967:192). Even primary school children could hardly believe the stance taken by the loyalists as expressed in the following conversation between Karanja and an unnamed boy:

“The home guards with their white masters. They are as bad as Mau Mau.”

“No. Mau Mau is not bad. The Freedom boys are fighting against white settlers.”

“Is it bad to fight for one’s land? Tell me that.”

“But they cut black men’s throats.”

“Those killed are the traitors! Black white settlers” (Ngugi, 1964:72).

Ngugi thus reveals that although some kids see Mau Mau as atavistic and perverse in the killing of the loyalists, others view them, the loyalists, as the ones being perverse and out of tune with the immediate need for liberation. Anderson (2005:239) adds that “elsewhere, the Home Guards have had a less good press, lampooned as self-seeking scoundrels, collaborators and quislings. In the eyes of the nationalists, Home Guards were ‘stumps’, whose obstinate resistance obstructed the rebellion.”

During the uprising government forces retaliated in different ways. As soon as Chief Warihui wa Kungu was assassinated, KAU activists and suspected Mau Mau members were rounded up and put in prison or in detention camps where “they endured all the ills of the white man, believing somehow that he who would endure to the end, would receive leaves of glory” (Ngugi, 1967:91). Barnett and Njama (1966:209) describe these tortures as follows:

There was also an increase of an inhuman torture in the local camps, e.g., men castrated, beatings aiming at fracturing a limb, putting *thabai* or *hatha* – poisonous stinging plant leaves of the nettle family which causes great pain and swelling for half a day – in women’s vaginas, pressing hard breasts or testicles with pliers. Hundreds of persons who fell victim of these tortures can be seen anywhere in the country or in towns as crippled beggars having lost one or both legs or arms or suffering other deformities. I have come across six castrated men, one of whom, Kamau Njoroge, was nicknamed *Mapengo* [toothless] due to the absence of his front teeth on both jaws which he lost at Simba Camp.

In addition to the killings, beatings and torture, starvation was accelerated in which thousands of children and old persons died.

In *A Grain of Wheat* Mugo tells the reader about the shocking and appalling tortures the detainees were subjected to while at Rira detention camp, where “detainees taken there consisted of a few who had sworn never to cooperate with the government as long as Kenyatta was in prison” (Ngugi, 1967:115). For instance, he reports that “a common game at Rira had been to bury a man, naked, in the hot sand, sometimes leaving him there overnight [and that] previously detainees suffering from typhoid were left to die” (Ngugi, 1967:116). Anderson (2005:317) also reports that “Manyani’s kitchens, in which the detainees cooked their food were fly-infested and disgracefully filthy. Overflowing latrine buckets were left in piles all over the camp.” In a BBC News Correspondent, McGhie reports of “castrations and blinding for defying captors, fatal whipping, rape by British soldiers, daily killings at a slave labour camp called Embakasi”. Despite the sickening treatment, most of the detainees did not reveal the activities of the Mau Mau movement to the enemy. Ngugi tells the reader that at Rira detention camp John Thompson, the District Officer, finds that “here he met different men; men who would not open their mouths, men who only stared at him” (Ngugi, 1967:116). Ngugi also tells the reader the following about Mugo while detained at Rira:

Many detainees never spoke. In fact, Mugo was the only one who consented to answer questions. But he only opened to repeat what he had said in all the camps. Thompson, like a tick, stuck to Mugo. He picked him up for punishment. Sometimes he would have the warders whip Mugo before the other detainees. Sometimes, in naked fury, he would snatch the whip from the warders and apply it himself. If Mugo had cried or asked for mercy Thompson might have relented. But now it seemed to him that all the detainees mocked and despised him for his failure to extort a cry from Mugo (Ngugi, 1967:117).

The British also used public hangings as another form of retaliation and dissuasion. Friedman (2008:6) mentions that “a mobile gallows was transported around the country dispensing justice to Mau Mau suspects. Dead insurgents, especially commanders, were displayed at cross-roads, at market places and at administrative centres.” In *A Grain of Wheat*, after Kihika has been captured, the reader is told:

Kihika was hanged in public, one Sunday, at Rung’ei market, not far from where he had once stood calling for blood to rain on and water the tree of freedom. A combined force of Homeguards and Police whipped and drove people from Thabai and other ridges to see the body of the rebel dangling on the tree and learn (Ngugi, 1967:17).

Although this incident is indeed horrible, instead of the masses getting disheartened, Ngugi informs the reader, “the party, however, remained alive and grew, as people put it, on the wounds of those Kihika left behind” (Ngugi, 1967:17). This asseverates the strong desire the Kenyans had in the myth for liberation. Pertaining to these numerous and relentless hangings, Anderson (2005:291) records that

Between October 1952 and March 1958, when the very last Mau Mau offender was executed, Kenya’s courts sentenced 1499 Kikuyu to death. The hangman was at his busiest between April 1953 and June 1955. In the final tally, the British hanged 1090 Kikuyu men for Mau Mau offences.

Another effective tool the British used to instil fear into the civilians was the Home Guard whose perverse conduct is encapsulated by Friedman (2008:6) who points out, “The Home Guard took whatever they wanted from families who supported Mau Mau. Others threatened to denounce loyal Kikuyu unless they were given bribes. Theft, intimidation, torture, castration and rape were commonplace.”

Chiefs and headmen were given honorary status for leading Home Guard units and they often took advantage of this added authority to terrorize civilians who were Mau Mau suspects or loyalists. For instance, in *Weep Not, Child*, Jacobo who is a government-appointed Chief and home guard has the right to convict anybody based on his suspicion like it is revealed in the following conversation between him (Jacobo) and Howlands:

“As I was telling you the other day, I keep an eye on everybody in the village. Now this man Ngotho, as you know, is a bad man. A very terrible man. He has taken many oaths ... you know, he is the one who led the strike.”

“I know,” Howlands cut in. “What has he done?”

“You know this man has sons. These sons of his had been away from the village for quite a long time. I think they are bringing trouble in the village ... I am very suspicious about Boro, the eldest son. Now this man, sir, had been to the war and I think, sir, he was connected with the strike-”

“Yes! Yes! What have they done?”

“I, well, sir, nothing, but you see these people work in secret. I was just thinking we should sort of remove them from the village ... send them to one of the detention camps ... Now, if we leave them alone, there’ll flare up big, big trouble in the village. Their detention

would make it easier to keep an eye on this Ngotho because as I was telling you he might be the real leader of the Mau Mau.”

“All right. Just keep an eye on the sons. Arrest them for anything, curfew, tax, you know what” (Ngugi, 1964:78-79).

The same night, while Njeri and Kori (Ngotho’s wife and son respectively) are walking to their hut to go and sleep, they are arrested for not observing the curfew. This is a malicious arrest because Njeri and Kori are not outside their homestead. Whatever Jacobo is doing, he is acting on suspicion without evidence. However, because he is a Chief he can send people to the notorious detention camps in Kenya at his own will. Actually, the white government paid the Home Guards to perpetrate black on black violence. Anderson (2005:253) reveals that

A fund was set aside from which to reward Home Guards for especially noteworthy service at the end of each month. Any success against the rebels, however small, got its reward and was loudly trumpeted in the propaganda war, as Baring’s government did its level best to hold the Kikuyu Home Guard on the front line in war against Mau Mau.

So it is not surprising that Kimeria in *Petals of Blood* betrays Abdulla and Nding’uri, Karega’s brother, to get them shot by the security forces. Though Nding’uri is killed, the crippled Abdulla remains true to the course of the struggle.

The British in addition unsuccessfully tried to bomb the guerrillas out of the Aberdares Mountain forests and Mount Kenya. In addition, the government introduced several operations such as “Buttercup”, “First Flute”, “Hammer”, “Primrose” and “Anvil”. For instance, “Operation Anvil” was launched on 24 April 1954 in Nairobi. Through this operation the security forces were able to screen about thirty thousand Africans and out of that number almost seventeen thousand were arrested on suspicion of complicity. For the rest of 1954 Nairobi remained under military control. Anderson (2005:254) affirms the use of “collective punishments” which were directed at communities accused of hiding Mau Mau insurgents or concealing information from the security forces as he testifies:

During 1953 the government confiscated 6000 cattle and 22,000 sheep and goats from Mau Mau suspects, along with over a hundred bicycles. By the time the collective punishments stopped, in May 1956,

those totals had more than doubled. Aside from these official confiscations, a great quantity of movable property was simply seized by the Home Guard as war booty.

They as well used pseudo gangs which consisted of ex-terrorists or de-oathed ex-Mau Mau members like Karanja about whom Ngugi (1967:199) writes, “His first job was in a hood. The hood – a white sack – covered all his body except the eyes. During the screening operations, people would pass in queues in front of the hooded man. By the nod of the head, the hooded man picked out those involved in Mau Mau.” This was done without any measurable achievement until they captured Field Marshal Dedan Kimathi on 21 October 1956. Anderson (2005:288) finds it strange that Ian Henderson, who loathed the murders and mutilations done by Kimathi remarks, “but there is also admiration for the rebel leader’s dedication, resoluteness and sheer grit ... the power of the man to command respect in others, to engage his following, to inspire and lead”. Kimathi’s arrest marked the beginning of the dreadful end as the uprising began to waver without any military victory. Friedman (2008:6) maintains that “the number of white civilians killed during the uprising was 32, while the number of African civilians killed by Mau Mau was officially put at 1,819, [while among] the insurgents, it is believed 11,000 were killed”. There are, however, new allegations by McGhie (2002:1) who asserts that, “Professor Caroline Elkins of Harvard University says that in excess of 50,000 people could have been killed by British security forces.” Nonetheless, the number of Mau Mau insurgents killed by the government forces did not let them abandon the struggle, for the desire to be independent was too strong. Consequently, the uprising made the British realize the need to leave Kenya an independent country in 1963, thereby fulfilling the Kenyan myth of freedom and land ownership.

3.6 The Myth of Education as a Liberating Tool in *The River Between and Weep Not, Child*

In *The River Between*, bourgeois education is given the status of having the ability to liberate mankind from imperialist shackles. It is ironical how Chege conceives that Waiyaki should go to Siriana school to learn the ways of the white man so that in turn he could lead his people to fight imperialism as Chege vouchsafes, “Arise. Heed the prophecy. Go to the Mission place. Learn all the wisdom and all the secrets of the

white man. But do not follow his vices. Be true to your people and the ancient rites” (Ngugi, 1965:20). This command poses the question of whether Waiyaki could stay pure and true to his people after being corrupted by a bourgeois education. Later when Waiyaki himself has his own school wonders, “Was the education he was trying to spread in the ridges not a contamination? (Ngugi, 1965:72). Besides, Chege is unaware that by getting the white man’s education his son will be serving the interests of the enemy and not the oppressed masses. Chege’s decision to send Waiyaki to school is similar to that of Ezeulu, the chief priest of Ulu in Achebe’s *Arrow of God*, who sends his son Oduche to church and tells him:

“The world is changing ... I want one of my sons to join these people and be my eye there. If there is nothing in it you will come back. But if there is something there you will bring home my share. The world is like a Mask dancing. If you want to see it well you do not stand in one place. My spirit tells me that those who do not befriend the white man today will be saying *had we known tomorrow*” (Achebe, 1986:45-46).

Except for Kabonyi and his Kiama, the rest of the people whose children are at Marioshoni school cherish Waiyaki’s vision and they ironically also see their school as “the symbol of their defiance of foreign ways” (Ngugi, 1965:92). They treasure the fact that their children are able to speak, read and write a foreign language unaware that their culture and traditions are gradually being eroded. They are also unaware that cherishing the foreigner’s language at the expense of their own is an admission of the myth of inferiority, a stance against which Ngugi has been so outspoken, especially when he started writing in his own Gikuyu language. Ngugi’s concern about the learning and usage of European languages is well articulated in *Penpoints, Gunpoints, and Dreams* (1998) in which he remarks that the African elite cannot share their acquired knowledge with the rest of their communities in the language of their own people, which becomes a stumbling block to development as he states:

Yet the African intellectual elite, with their *episteme* and *techne* refuse to transfer even the little they have already acquired into the language of the majority below. The chorus is the same: let them first learn European languages. In the mean time, the game continues: knowledge researched by the sons and daughters of Africa, and actually paid for by the entire working majority who need it most, is stored in European granaries. There can be no real economic growth and development where a whole people are denied access to the

latest developments in science, technology, health, medicine, business, finance, and other skills for survival because all these are stored in foreign languages. Ignorance in ideas is a guarantee against rapid economic growth (Ngugi, 1998:90).

Ngugi's concern is that the elite have failed to translate acquired learning for their people to enable them to participate in the world developments because of the inaccessibility of knowledge to the less privileged masses who cannot understand European languages. Since the disadvantaged people's lives cannot change, education has, therefore, failed to liberate them. Ngugi vouchsafes that language is not only a barrier to development but to democracy as well since information is not accessible to the majority of the people in the native language. It is only accessible to the chosen few who understand European languages while the masses are left out owing to language problems as he mentions:

If you take the more inclusive notion of a people as the working majority, or as all people in the nation where equality is numerical rather than functional, then it is clear that there can be no democracy where a whole people have been denied the use of their languages, where they have been turned strangers in their own country. The peasant and the worker in Africa have been denied participation in discourses about their own economic, political, and cultural survival. They have no access to information. For democracy to thrive, information must be accessible to all equally. Issues of language inequalities should then be linked to those of social inequalities within African nations themselves. In other words, any search for a new social order within an African nation will have to address the language question (Ngugi, 1998:92).

For this reason, Rao (1999:162-163) reports that "Ngugi and his wife Njeeri have started the journal *Mutiiri* – a journal devoted entirely to publishing in the Gikuyu language. The journal encourages translations from any language in the world into Gikuyu." Besides, the white man's education has not been able to drive him away, an issue which remains central to the downtrodden masses. In fact, Kabonyi and the Kiama are at the vanguard of the liberation struggle. In his speeches Kabonyi reflects an understanding of the sentiments and real interests of the masses as is made apparent in the following passage:

A moment too soon Kabonyi was on his feet. He knew his audience well and knew what to appeal to. He could speak in proverbs and

riddles, and nothing could appeal more to the elders who still appreciated a subtle proverb and witty riddles.

He reminded them of the poverty of the land. The dry months had left the people with nothing to eat. And the expected harvest would not yield much. He touched on the land taken by the white man. He talked of the new taxes being imposed on the people by the Government post now in their midst. And instead of Waiyaki leading people against these more immediate ills, he was talking of more buildings. And was the white man's education really necessary. Surely there was another way out. It was better to drive the white man from the hills altogether. Were there no warriors left in the tribe? He, Kabonyi, would lead them. That was why he had formed the new Kiama. He would rid the country of the influence of the white man. He would restore the purity of the tribe and its wisdom.

'Or do you think the education of your tribe, the education and wisdom which you all received, is in any way below that of the white man?' (Ngugi, 1965:95).

Mda reveals the same negative effects of colonization in South Africa in most of his novels. Although Irumba (1980:194) remarks that the speech reflects "the reactionarism and intransigence of the anti-modernist peasants, as against the messianism of bourgeois enlightenment", Ogude (1999:70) asserts that Kabonyi "sees clearly the dangers of taking on the ways of the white man uncritically [and that] to follow Waiyaki is to widen the gap that already exists in the tribe by adding in general terms an alien culture to the alien religion". Instead, it is action against the white man that people need, not his polluting ideologies. Waiyaki's friend, Kinuthia, encapsulates clearly the urgent need of a revolution vis-à-vis education, "People wanted to move forward. They could not do so as long as their lands were taken, as long as their children were forced to work in the settled ridges, as long as women and men were forced to pay hut-tax" (Ngugi, 1965:118). When Kabonyi sits down, Ngugi informs the reader, "some saw a lot of truth in what Kabonyi had said. They knew they were not cowards. And surely it was easier to drive away the white man and return to the old ways!" (Ngugi, 1965:96). Waiyaki's downfall is largely caused by his break from the Kiama and as Ngugi puts it, "he did not know what the inner circle under the leadership of Kabonyi would be up to" (Ngugi, 1965:101). He lets himself drift away from the political activities and becomes ignorant of the new developments. Kinuthia once more encapsulates this mistake and tries to warn him:

Be careful, Waiyaki. You do not know about the new oath. You have been too busy. But they are taking the new oath in your name. And remember Kabonyi hates, hates you. He would kill you if he could. Why? The Kiama has power. Power. And your name is in it, giving it even greater power. Your name will be your ruin. Be careful (Ngugi, 1965:112).

When the Kiama accuses Waiyaki of betraying the tribe to both the white man and uncircumcised Christians at Joshua's church, he is obviously blinded by his vision of unity and development when he reacts, "I too am concerned with the purity of the tribe. I am also concerned with the growth and development of the ridges. We cannot do this through hatred. We must be united, Christians and non-Christians, Makuyu or Kamenno. For salvation of the hills lies in our hands" (Ngugi, 1965:127-128). Waiyaki is ignorant that his visits to Siriana to look for teachers are intended to entrench the community into the white man's ways in the name of education and finally unity of the two ridges. The schools he is concerned about are not liberating them from white domination. The schools are not giving them their land back. Since he visits Siriana without the blessing of the Kiama, Waiyaki fails to bail himself out of their accusations. The same applies to his visits to Joshua's church or Nyambura who is uncircumcised and, therefore, unclean. Subsequently, it becomes easy for the powerful Kiama to remove him from his position as teacher and leader. In *Homecoming* (1972:32) Ngugi admits that education as a tool of liberation has failed:

Education was not an adequate answer to the hungry soul of the African masses because it emphasized the same Christian values that had refused to condemn [in fact helped] the exploitation of the African body and mind by the European colonizer. The first education given was merely to enable converts to read the Bible, so that they could carry out simple duties as assistants to the missionaries. As education came later to be the ladder to better jobs and money and to a higher standard of living, albeit in the image of the European mode of life, the Christian educated African became even more removed from the ancestral shrines and roots.

In *Weep Not, Child*, education is seen as a tool to liberate people from socio-economic problems as demonstrated by the conversation between Njoroge and Kamau:

“But I am glad you’re going to school. Everything will be right. Get education, I’ll get carpentry. Then we shall, in the future, be able to have a new and better home for the whole family.”

“Yes,” Njoroge said thoughtfully. “That’s what I want. And you know, I think Jacobo is rich as Mr Howlands because he got education. And that’s why each takes his children to school because of course they have learnt the value of it” (Ngugi, 1964:4).

It is ironical that Njoroge admires a person who in the end destroys him. Like Waiyaki before him, he values education above the urgent political liberation. Boro too “had always shown a marked interest in Njoroge’s progress at school” (Ngugi, 1964:69), in spite of his commitment in the Mau Mau activities. Njoroge’s parents are not immune to the luxury brought about by their son’s education. Ngotho feels that his son’s education will change his social standing to the level of Jacobo’s while Nyokabi’s elation is apparent in the following passage:

It was to her the greatest reward she would get from motherhood if she one day found her son writing letters, doing arithmetic and speaking English. It did not matter if anyone died poor provided he or she could one day say, ‘Look, I’ve a son as good and as well-educated as any you can find in the land’ (Ngugi, 1964:16).

Education is obviously being accorded such a high status in this community that people would sacrifice anything to get their children to school. Nyokabi is so inspired that she wishes she could send her married daughters to school to at least speak English which she obviously regards as superior to her own Gikuyu language. The family believes once Njoroge is educated enough, they will not have to live as squatters and *ahois*:

If Njoroge could now get all the white man’s learning, would Ngotho even work for Howlands and especially as the wife was reputed to be a hard woman? Again, would they as a family continue to live as Ahoi in another man’s land, a man who clearly resented their stay? (Ngugi, 1964:16).

The myth in the foregoing passage is that education will render Njoroge a wealthy person resulting in the family gaining independence and self-sustenance. Not only will education make the African children rich, but ironically also empower them to repossess their ancestors’ lands. In a monologue Njoroge remembers what his father Ngotho told him about this, “Ye-e-s. I’ve heard father say so. He says that if people

had had education, the white man would not have taken all the land. I wonder why our old folk, the dead old folk, had no learning when the white man came?" (Ngugi, 1964:37). In a way Njoroge also ironically perceives education as a tool for political liberation. His education is, therefore, meant to set his people free from colonial oppression as shown in the following passage:

Through all this, Njoroge was still sustained by his love for and belief in education and his own role when the time came. And the difficulties at home seemed to have sharpened this appetite. Only education could make something out of this wreckage. He became more faithful to his studies. He would one day use all his learning to fight the white man, for he would continue the work that his father had started. When these moments caught him, he actually saw himself as a possible saviour of the whole God's country. Just let him get learning. Let the time come when he ... (Ngugi, 1964:82).

When Njoroge passes his primary school examination, and has to proceed to the mission school in Siriana, his success affects everyone in his family in spite of the troubled times they are going through:

Ngotho was pleased. And Nyokabi and Njeri were full of joy at the news. For the first time for many years something like a glimmer of light shone in Ngotho's eyes. He could even be seen making an effort to walk upright. Here at last was a son who might be a credit to the family. Here was a son who might eventually be a match for the Howlands and the Jacobo's and any others who at all despised him. Kamau too was pleased. He hoped he could go on helping Njoroge. Njoroge might do something for the family (Ngugi, 1964:104).

The very excitement experienced by the family is also felt by the rest of the village. It is ironic that even when the village is at war with the colonizer it continues to value his education and sees education as a weapon to defeat him (the colonizer). It is again ironic how they think the coloniser can design a weapon meant to help another person other than himself:

The news of his success passed from hill to hill. In spite of the troubled time, people still retained a genuine interest in education. Whatever their differences, interest in knowledge and book-learning was the one meeting point between people such as Boro, Jacobo and Ngotho. Somehow the Gikuyu people always saw their deliverance as embodied in education (Ngugi, 1964:104).

It is equally inconceivable how people who are archrivals on political issues agree on educational. Nonetheless, when Njoroge has to leave for Siriana Secondary School the village people contribute money because he is now a communal asset. Njoroge too continues to harbour the perception that “education would be the fulfilment of a wider and more significant vision – a vision that embraced the demand made on him, not only by his father, but also by his mother, his brothers and even the village” (Ngugi 1964:105). Ogude (1999:22) maintains that, “For Ngugi the school, a colonial institution in the form of education, could be appropriated in the service of black freedom. In a significant way, Njoroge continues the modernist lexicon of Waiyaki – education for liberation.”

When Njoroge is in Siriana Secondary School, he, like Waiyaki, perceives education as a means of uniting different people. Ironically, the unity he refers to is prompted by the white colonial teachers:

Yet they were white men. They never talked of colour; they never talked down to Africans; and they could work closely, joke, and laugh with their black colleagues who came from different tribes. Njoroge at times wished the whole country was like this. This seemed a little paradise, a paradise where children from all walks of life and of different religious faiths could work together without any consciousness (Ngugi, 1964:115).

These words are a direct statement of the myth of liberation – a wish or an ideal hoped to be fulfilled. This is Njoroge’s ideal community which has been liberated from religious and racial differences. However, this day-dreaming is short-lived when the colonial ogres and vampires with their agents prey on his family. Ogude (1999:22) states that, “like Waiyaki, he ends up dejected and disillusioned because of the complexity of the moment which cannot be understood purely in such simplistic terms like unity, sacrifice, education and progress”. Gikandi (2000:91) augments this by mentioning that, “But because England and Englishness prove elusive to colonial subjects like Njoroge, the education that was supposed to secure alienated land rights comes to function as a source of disenchantment and further alienation.”

3.7 The Myth of Liberation from Neo-colonialism

Neo-colonialism refers to the involvement of powerful countries in the affairs of less powerful ones especially after the latter have received political independence from the former. Yew (n.d) quotes Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first post-independence president, as remarking about neo-colonialism:

- It continues to actively control the affairs of the newly independent state.
- In most cases neo-colonialism is manifested through economic and monetary measures. For example, the neo-colonial territories become the target markets for imports from the imperial centre(s).
- While neo-colonialism may be a form of continuing control by a state's former colonial master, these states may also become subjected to imperial power by new actors. These new actors include the United States or may be international financial and monetary organizations.
- As the ruling elite pay constant deference to the neo-colonial masters, the needs of the population are often ignored leaving issues of living conditions like education, development, and poverty unresolved.

The points mentioned above are supported by another internet article, <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Neocolonialism>, which states:

Critics of neo-colonialism argue that existing or past international economic arrangements created by former colonial powers were, or are, used to maintain control of their former colonies and dependencies after the colonial independence movements of the post-World War 11 period ... Critics of neo-colonialism contend that private, foreign business companies continue to exploit the resources of post-colonial peoples, and that this economic control inherent to neo-colonialism is akin to the classical, European colonialism practised from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries.

It cannot be denied that colonialism has brought some changes to dark Africa by bringing formal education, modern communications, exportable agricultural crops, industries that provided a base for economic development, and the Christian religions to supplant paganism. However, as Obadina (2000:1) maintains, "Whatever may have been its plusses and minuses, colonialism was a dictatorial regime that denied peoples' rights of self determination. It brought death, pain and humiliation to millions of its victims. The notion that colonialism was a civilizing mission is a myth – the system was propelled by Europe's economic and political self-interest." Therefore, in essence the freedom any independent country can boast about today is

pseudo independence since its economy and natural resources will be in the management and control of its former colonizer as Obadina (2000:2) says, “the implication is that western powers still control African nations whose rulers are either willing puppets or involuntary subordinates of these powers” (*Ibid*). In addition, since the newly independent country usually does not own means of production, it is, therefore, dependent on its former colonizer, so that any hope of making any profit will just be wishful thinking. And as long as the said profit is not invested in the local economy, there is also no hope for economic development leading to the smothering of social development. For any country to have genuine independence, it must cut economic ties with its former colonizer and become economically independent.

3.7.1 The Kenya Land Freedom Army Charter and the people’s expectations

In *The Dedan Kimathi Papers*, Kinyatti (1987:16) records eighteen articles which formed the heart of the Kenya Land Freedom Army Charter. The researcher would like to single out a few of these articles which turn out to be Ngugi’s base of protest against neo-colonialism:

Article 1: We want African self-government now.

Article 2: We reject foreign laws in Kenya, for they were not made for Kenya and are therefore not just.

.Article10: We demand that Africans should have control of gold, markets, roads, co-operative societies and auctions.

Article 11: We reject colonialism in Kenya because it has turned us into slaves and beggars.

Article 16: Our real fight is not against the white colour but against the System carried on by the white rulers.

Article 18: Our people will chase away foreign exploiters, wipe out the traitors and establish an independent government of the Kenyan people.

These articles are the fundamental reasons behind the Mau Mau (Kenya Land Freedom Army). When Kenya became independent on 12 December 1963, the Kenyans had reason to rejoice, thinking that their expectations would be realized. Kinyatti (1991:38) further states the following about the people’s aspirations:

In summary, it was the general popular desire and wish that the previous and racist regime be dismantled and replaced with a militant anti-imperialist national one which would not only eradicate vestiges of the past, but would also protect the people from further oppression or exploitation. Kenyans expected the new governing order to initiate immediate measures towards reconstruction, redistribution and overall equitable social development. They wanted the entire economic infrastructure (finance, commerce, industry, mines) to be collectively owned and run by the people in order to ensure full national benefit and control, and the land issue to be resolved justly and democratically through an agrarian revolution. Furthermore, it was a clear understanding that the rich indigenous cultural heritage rooted in our own history, tradition and national experience would be protected from harmful foreign influences and the majority of the African population, having borne the brunt of oppression and been dispossessed by colonialism, would receive preferential, remedial, or compensatory considerations in all spheres of Kenya's political and social life.

Nonetheless, the status quo described above, like in most African countries, has not been realized. Ngugi (1993:78) in *Moving the Centre* states that for any people to be regarded as entirely free, it is only "when they control all the tools, all the instruments, all the means of their physical, economic, political, cultural, and psychological survival. In short, when they control the means and context of their integrated survival and development." But this is a myth in itself which both Ngugi and Mda refute. Both these writers stress that unlimited freedom without responsibility leads to corruption and chaos. One of the most forceful revelations are unlimited greed found in *Devil on the Cross* or the results of unthinkable freedom without strong obligations, as is happening in South Africa after the first democratic elections in 1994. In addition, Ngugi provides reasons why this free integrated development has not been able to take off:

First it has been the external factor of foreign invasion, occupation and control and second, the internal factor of collaboration with the external threat. Whether under Western slavery and the slave trade, under colonialism and today under neo-colonialism the two factors have interacted to the detriment of our being. The greedy chief and feudal elements collaborated with the slave dealer from Europe. The same story repeats itself under colonial invasion and occupations. Some greedy chiefs and other elements bred by the new colonial overlords collaborated with the main external imperialist factor. The story repeats itself, in a more painful way, under neo-colonialism (Ngugi, 1993:78).

Kenya has hardly become independent when Ngugi foreshadows elements of betrayal of the people's struggle in *A Grain of Wheat*, which portrays a continuation of the political, economic and social practices established by the colonial regime. For instance, when Mugo is about to betray Kihika to the police, he considers the possibilities money can bring to his life and the type of power it would give him:

These lofty sensations were mixed up with thoughts of the money reward and the various possibilities opened before him. He would buy more land. He would build a big house. His place in society would be established. He would be half-way on the road to power. And what is greatness but power? What's power? A judge is powerful: he can send a man to death, without anyone questioning his authority, judgement, or harming his body in return. Yes – 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, 1967:171-172).

It is obvious that Mugo sees the effects of money and power through colonial eyes, and if given a chance, he would have taken part in the perpetration of such arbitrary political practices as in those revealed in *Devil on the Cross* and *Petals of Blood* respectively. Gikonyo's business ethics shows that he is a real capitalist. While people in Thabai acknowledge his hard work, they also know they have to pay promptly:

But if he promptly fulfilled his part of the contract, he expected no less from the other side. Thus he insisted on getting the money at the agreed day and time. He would not countenance a delay. He treated the poor and the rich alike. But they trusted and came to respect his scrupulous honesty. At least he did fulfil, on time, his own part of the bargain (Ngugi, 1967:51).

Gikonyo's business dealings with his people encourage him to further exploit them when he buys and hoards bags of maize and beans during harvest time to sell to them in times of scarcity at a higher price, making huge profits. On seeing the success this brings to Gikonyo, "some even tried to follow his example with varying degrees of success" (Ngugi, 1967:52). Evidently people want to emulate Gikonyo's business conduct as ideal, hence their exaltation of the capitalist world-view. Caminero-Santangelo (1998:145) mentions that, "Gikonyo is a significant threat to Kenya not only because he becomes wealthy by manipulating his people's needs

and perpetuating the effects of colonial policy, but also because he becomes the means of glorifying the capitalist world-view.” Ngugi thus tells the reader, “The story of Gikonyo’s rise to wealth, although on a small scale, carried a moral every mother in Thabai pointed out to her children” (Ngugi, 1967:52). Kerkhoff (n.d) makes the following comment about the dangers foreshadowed by the capitalist perspective which Gikonyo represents:

If Kenya accepts him (Gikonyo) as its hero, as a representative of its values, the result will be a society structured around self interest; this will enable those with power and wealth to identify Kenya’s “progress” with their own. As the minority continue to advance materially and politically at the expense of the rest of the nation, they become part of the first world which benefits from the underdevelopment of the third world. The result will be the betrayal of the majority of the Kenyan people.

In *Petals of Blood* Karega tells the reader of Chui who at one stage while still a student at Siriana Secondary School, became a popular hero, a living legend, who took the side of the students and workers, and was expelled for initiating a strike “against the establishment that worked to oppress the students and train them to accept their plight – an establishment represented by the aptly named new headmaster, Cambridge Fraudsham” (Roos, 2002:158). Later other students went on a strike for refusing to take Fraudsham orders while they demanded, “We wanted to be taught African literature, African history, for we wanted to know ourselves better. Why should ourselves be reflected in white snows, spring flowers fluttering by on icy lakes? ... We wanted an African headmaster and African teachers. We denounced the prefect system, the knightly order of masters and menials” (Ngugi, 1977:170). These students further demanded that Chui, the former heroic strike leader, be their new headmaster. Karega further informs the reader, “We vowed that should we get an African headmaster we would give him the utmost obedience; we would work even harder, as not to shame him and ourselves ... we called ourselves African Populists and we wanted a populist headmaster (Ngugi, *Ibid*). However, when Chui arrives, he is “a black replica of Fraudsham” (Ngugi, 1977:170), and he tells the students, “there would be no hasty programme of Africanisation, reckless speed invariably being the undoing of so many a fine school ... far from destroying the prefect system, he would inject it with new blood. Obedience was the royal road to

order and stability, the only basis of sound education” (Ngugi, 1977:170). So in everything that Chui does, he basically perpetuates colonial policies and practices. It is, therefore, fitting to mention that Gikonyo is in essence a progenitor of cunning characters such as Gitutu wa Gataanguiri and Kihaahu wa Gatheeca in *Devil on the Cross*; Mzigo, Chui and Kimeria in *Petals of Blood*; John Boy Junior and Robert Williams in *Matigari*; characters whose exploitive economic practices are a perpetration of colonialism. The wealth of the country is still controlled by western countries with a few blacks who have been allowed to be shareholders and made directors to humbug change.

The Rungei MP in *A Grain of Wheat* too foreshadows the Kenyan politicians who advance materially and politically at the expense of the poor masses, but later isolate themselves from them (the masses) while they (the masses) remain unattended to and destitute. Worst of all, the MP cannot even be with his constituency during the Uhuru celebrations as he has to entertain the foreigners who are sure to butter his slice of bread as he tells Gikonyo, “please thank the branch and the elders for inviting me. But on that day all the members of Parliament have been invited to various functions here. So apologize to the people for me and say I can’t come” (Ngugi, 1967:56).

The researcher has already alluded to the expectations the Kenyan people have for a better life after independence. These hopes are, however, dashed in Ngugi’s later novels. For instance, in *Devil on the Cross*, Ngugi uses the Biblical parable of the three talents in Mathews 25:14-26 to express the gross violation of Article 18 of the Charter. In principle the colonizers have left Kenya, but in essence they control its resources, its wealth, with only a few black faces as shareholders and managers of these companies, while the masses continue to toil as before.

War veterans such as Abdulla in *Petals of Blood*, and Matigari in *Matigari*, who had hoped to benefit from their sacrifices are extremely disillusioned with the treatment they receive from the government. Abdulla, who has unsuccessfully waited for land redistribution, employment opportunities or securing a bank loan to buy a farm, tells the reader:

“For weeks and months after I kept on singing the song in anticipation.
“I waited for land reforms and redistribution.
“I waited for a job.
“I heard that they were giving loans for people to buy out European farms. I did not see why I should buy lands already bought by the blood of the people. Still I went there. They told me: this is New Kenya. No free things. Without money you cannot buy land: and without land and property you cannot get a bank loan to start a business or buy land” (Ngugi, 1977:254).

Matigari's hope to rebuild his home and start a peaceful future is also dashed because on his return he finds that the masses are still dispossessed of their land and property. As Guthera and Muriuki enquire, “Were these not the houses which had once belonged to the colonial settlers but now belong to the very rich, the foreign and the local people of all colours – black, brown and white?” (Ngugi, 1989:43). These masses still slave in the plantations on empty stomachs. The most vulnerable group in society, the children, have made a scrap yard their home. Kinyatti (1991:39) argues that the majority of freedom fighters are consistently insisting that beside implementing the KANU manifesto, the KANU government has to immediately return all the land that was confiscated by the British colonizers to the original owners. Kinyatti mentions that to counteract this demand, Jomo Kenyatta told the nation:

Some people, particularly the so-called freedom fighters, have been going around saying that all European farms will be distributed freely to the landless. But I want to make it very clear that no one will be allowed to occupy land which is not his and I will crush anyone who goes against the policy of my Government. *Hakuna cha bure* [There is nothing for free]. Those who want free things must go to China or Tanzania.

This was a changed Kenyatta and his words were bitter to the audience of the day. Farm labourers and factory workers also expect visible changes to their lives but ironically this does not happen. Munira in *Petals of Blood* notices that two of the labourers who had remained in his father's employment were “still wearing the same patched trousers and *nginjira* [probably sandals] for shoes” (Ngugi, 1977:14). This is evinced by an employee in a tea plantation owned by Milk Stream Tea Estate during a politically organized Tea Party at Gatundu meant to unite the employers and their servants. When the said employee protests about the debased workers' conditions in post Uhuru Kenya, he is beaten so badly and “they stepped on his neck and pressed it with their boots against the floor, and only when he made animal noises did they

stop” (Ngugi, 1977:93). This is a serious betrayal of the ideals and objectives of the Mau Mau movement. Nonetheless, this employee is craving for things to change for the better as their basic conditions of employment are not different from what they were during the colonial era.

When the devastating drought in Ilmorog gets worse, Karega proposes the journey to Nairobi to confront Nderi wa Riera, their MP, with the problems created by the drought. This journey is reminiscent of similar journeys, for instance, in Armah’s *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968), Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions* (1988) or Ousmane’s Dakar-Niger railway line strikers in *God’s Bits of Wood*. Dseagu (2008:99) points out that while the journey occupies a central place in the novel, “Ngugi regards this bold action by remote rural peasants who are normally perceived as people resigned to their fate to change their economic circumstances as an indication of the awakening of political consciousness among the ranks of the little people.” For a moment, divisiveness is suspended as Ilmorog works to preserve its lands and traditions. The delegation endures the worst trials to liberate its community from the yoke of neo-colonialism. The journey gives Abdullah an opportunity to teach others the survivalist skills he has learnt during the Mau Mau guerilla war as Ngugi states, “His stoic endurance infused strength and purpose into the enterprise” (Ngugi, 1977:134). While on this journey, Abdullah dreams of a new life without the intricacies and trappings of neo-colonialism:

How he had trembled as the vision opened out, embracing new thoughts, new desires, new possibilities! To redeem the land: to fight so that the industries like the shoe-factory which had swallowed his sweat could belong to the people: so that his children could one day have enough to eat and to wear under adequate shelter from rain: so that they would say in pride, my father died so that I might live: this had transformed him from a slave before a boss into a man. That was the day of his circumcision into a man (Ngugi, 1977:136).

This dream is symbolic of the people’s wish to be freed from the claws of neo-colonialism, and is encapsulated in the freedom myth. Hence, the delegation endures thirst, hunger, the scorching sun, the pricking of the elephant grass on their bare soles, as well as the embarrassment and humiliations of the decadent Blue Hills. For instance, before they can enter the third estate to get assistance in order to help the ailing Joseph, they are arrested and interrogated by Hawkins Kimeria, “who exposes the exploitative nature of his own class and its capacity for betrayal and collusion

when he discusses his relationship with the Ilmorog MP, Nderi wa Riera” (Robson, 1987:131). Wanja has to be raped by the same Kimeria for the release of the delegation that is held hostage. Instead of giving the hungry delegation food, the hypocritical Reverend Brown chooses to offer them spiritual food as well as perfidious prayers for the sick. Commenting on this journey Jean (1991:78) also maintains that, “Besides the exploitive outlook of the big city and its indifference to rural needs, the delegation encounters a degree of callousness and inhumanity that borders on sadism.” Nonetheless, the delegation puts up with these hardships in order to liberate their village from political and socio-economic neglect. Wanja’s rape is similar to that of the Khoikhoi women in Mda’s *The Heart of Redness*, who sell their bodies to the British soldiers in order to smuggle canisters of gunpowder to the fighting soldiers in the Amathole Mountains. Both texts use prostitution as a weapon to fight for the liberation of the oppressed masses.

The journey to Nairobi at least yields some positive but ironical results. The newly built Trans-Africa road catapults the deserted village into a new town bringing business opportunities to the people. A proper shopping centre, ranches, a tourist centre, and a game park are built. While this is a sign of development, the former Ilmorog traditions and cultural values as well as their livelihood are eroded. People lose their fields, upon which their lives depend. Herd men are “driven further afield into the drier parts [and] a few [become] workers on the wheat fields and ranches on the earth upon which they once roamed freely” (Ngugi, 1977:280). Mwathi, the mysterious spirit of which the Ilmorog society has been proud, is destroyed by giant bulldozers which symbolize the forces of modernization. Small business enterprises such as that of Abdulla are replaced by the big enterprises of the avid Mzigo, Chui, Kimeria, Nderi, their MP, and Jerrod. For instance, Wanja and Abdullah are forced to sell their Theng’eta business to the newly created Theng’eta Breweries and in turn they become unemployed. New Ilmorog is divided into two residential areas, namely Cape Town, which is set aside for “farm managers, country council officials, the managers of Barclays, and African Economic Banks, and other servants of state and money power” (Ngugi, 1977:280), while New Jerusalem is reserved for the downtrodden masses in the society. Robson (1987:143) adds that “New Ilmorog is an extended metaphor for the regional disparity caused by the development of capitalist enclave in the midst of poverty and underdevelopment.” As she tries to

seek revenge for her victimization, Wanja joins the capitalist exploiters when she builds her Sunshine Lodge and establishes other big businesses. Mzigo, Chui and Kimeria in *Petals of Blood*; Gitutu wa Gatanguuru and Kahahuuha wa Gatheera in *Devil on the Cross*, and John Boy Junior and Robert Williams in *Matigari* have become the greedy accumulators of wealth. They even know that if they want to build a great civilization, they must “kneel down before the god of money, ignore the beautiful faces of [their] children, parents, brothers or sisters, [and realize] it is far better to drink the blood of [their] people and eat their flesh than retreat a step” (Ngugi, 1980:89), actions that go directly against the Kenyan myth of sharing and co-operating, in other words, the *ubuntu* principle.

3.7.2 Possibilities of liberation from neo-colonialism?

When Karega in *Petals of Blood* returns to Ilmorog after a span of five years, he notices evidence of economic disparities. Neither does Karega accept Wanja’s cynical viewpoint, “You eat somebody or you are eaten. You sit on somebody or somebody sits on you” (Ngugi, 1977:291). Instead, he finds himself saying, “There is another way: There must be other ways. Must we have this world? Is there only one world? Then we must create another world, a new earth” (Ngugi, 1977:294). Obviously, Karega refuses to live in a world in which only a few people enjoy most of the wealth of the country at the expense of the exploited masses as Karega later contemplates, this new world can only be attained through the struggle by the exploited masses themselves:

The true lesson of history was this: that the so-called victims, the poor, the downtrodden, the masses, had always struggled with their spears and arrows, with their hands and songs of courage and hope, to end their oppression and exploitation: that they would continue struggling until a human kingdom came: a world in which goodness and beauty and strength and courage would be seen not in how cunning one can be, not in how much power to oppress one possessed, but only in one’s contribution in creating a more humane world in which the inherited inventive genius of man in culture and science from all ages and climes would be not the monopoly of a few, but for the use of all, so that all flowers in all their different colours would ripen and bear fruits and seeds. And the seeds would be put into the ground and they would once again sprout and flower in rain, in sunshine (Ngugi, 1977:303).

With this dream broiling in his mind, Karega joins the Theng'eta Breweries and becomes "a trade union agitator who mobilizes the workers and the peasants to rid the society of exploitation" (Uwasombo, 2006:5). It is only when he is dismissed from the brewery and later arrested for being suspected of having killed Kimeria, Chui and Mzigo that the magnitude of his influence is noticed. Akinyi, a girl he has seen at the factory, has the following conversation with him:

"What is your name?"

"Akinyi. They sent me-"

"Who?"

"The other workers ... with a message. They are with you ... and they are ... we are planning another strike and a march through Ilmorog."

"But who-?"

"The movement of Ilmorog workers ... not just the union of workers at the breweries. All workers in Ilmorog and the unemployed will join us. And the small farmers ... and even some small traders" (Ngugi, 1977:343).

It is apparent that the workers have been incited to liberate themselves from neo-colonialism. Akinyi also tells Karega about the death of an important person who is gunned down while collecting money for rent and the consequences of this death:

"He profiteered on the misery of the poor. It was probably robbers who did it, but all the same-"

"Not robbers. According to Ruma Monga it's more than that. They left a note. They called themselves Wakombozi – or the society of one world liberation ... and they say it's Stanley Mathenge returned from Ethiopia to complete the war he and Kimathi started ... There are rumours about a return to the forests and the mountains ..."

Mathenge back? He turned this over in his mind. It could not be possible. But what did it matter? New Mathenges ... new Koitalels ... new Kimathis ... new Piny Owachos ... these were born everyday among the people (Ngugi, 1977:344).

Wakombozi is a new urban guerrilla movement ready to launch attacks against the evil practices of neo-colonialism. Its activities reassure Karega of the possibilities of a continued fight against neo-colonialism and the emergence of new leaders with new visions to serve and sacrifice their lives for the right course. The rejuvenated Karega reviews the situation:

The system and its gods and its angels had to be fought consciously, consistently and resolutely by all the working people! From Koitalel

through Kang'ethe to Kimathi it had been the peasants, aided by the workers, small traders and small landowners, who had mapped out the path. Tomorrow it would be the workers and the peasants leading the struggle and seizing power to overturn the system of all its bloodthirsty gods and gnomish angels, bringing to an end the reign of the few over the many and the era of drinking blood and feasting on human flesh. Then, and only then, would the kingdom of man and woman really begin, they joying and loving in creative labour (Ngugi, 1977:344).

As the novel closes, Karega is pleased to realize that “he was no longer alone” (Ngugi, 1977:345) in the struggle against neo-colonialism. This knowledge will enable him to endure and survive his stay in prison. As Uwasomba (2006:6) claims, “the novel ends with a strong hope of a proletarian revolution, as there is the realization on the part of the Kenyan workers and peasants of the possibilities of overthrowing international capitalism and its neo-colonial agents”. Ngugi himself also maintains that in writing *Petal of Blood*, “I was only trying to be faithful to what Kenyan workers and peasants have always realized as shown by their historical struggles since 1895” (Ngugi, 1992:97).

In *Devil on the Cross*, when Muturi has listened to the testimonies of Gitutu wa Gataanguru and Kihaahu wa Gatheecha on how they amass wealth from the poor masses, he decides to mobilize the workers and the unemployed around Njeruca and informs them about the meeting of international robbers and thieves assembled in the cave. Like Karega in *Petals of Blood*, Muturi believes it is the force of the workers that can redress the socio-economic imbalances that have been created by capitalism. As he tells Mwaura, “Let them be arrested by the working people now that they, the thieves and robbers, have congregated in one den to parade their full bellies and to pour scorn on us” (Ngugi, 1980:158). Towards sunset a long procession of women, men, students, and children is seen winding along the road to the cave, singing:

Come one and all,
And behold the wonderful sight
Of us chasing away the Devil
And all his disciples
Come one and all (Ngugi, 1980:158).

While the song is intended to appeal to the masses for their unqualified support, it is also meant to inspire and embolden them against any confrontation as well as to alarm the said thieves and robbers. Some of the people in the procession are carrying placards bearing different slogans such as:

WE REJECT THE SYSTEM OF THEFT AND ROBBERY; OUR POVERTY IS THEIR WEALTH; THE THIEF AND THE WITCH ARE TWINS – THEIR MOTHER IS EXPLOITATION; THE BEEHIVE IN WHICH WE WILL ROLL THIEVES AND ROBBERS DOWN THE SLOPES OF THE HILL OF DEATH HAS ALREADY BEEN BUILT BY THE WORKERS; WHAT IS THE BIGGEST THEFT? THE THEFT OF THE SWEAT AND THE BLOOD OF THE WORKERS! WHAT IS THE BIGGEST ROBBERY? THE ROBBERY OF THE BLOOD OF THE MASSES (Ngugi, 1980:203).

The slogans display the outrage of the masses against the nefarious practices of neo-colonialism. Hence the resoluteness of the people in the procession as confirmed by the huge turnout at the strike as well as the knobkierries they carry on their shoulders. Gatuiria and Wariinga are so struck by this procession that they cannot help but compare it to an army waging war against the enemy:

“This is really an army!” said Gatuiria.

“An army of workers?” Wariinga asked.

“Yes, and peasants, and petty traders, and students ...”

“...led by the workers ...”

“And taking the battle to the cave!” Gatuiria added (Ngugi, 1980:203).

The tenacity shown by Muturi about this whole affair is remarkable. Gatuiria and Wariinga try to warn him about possible arrest by the police, but he remains firm and unflinching. He tells them:

But I will not run away. We shall not run away. For us workers there is no turning back – where could we run? Let me tell you, I’m sure that the system of robbery and theft will never end in this country as long as people are scared of guns and clubs. We must struggle and fight against the culture of fear. And there is only one cure: a strong organization of the workers and peasants of the land, together with those whose eyes and ears are now open and alert. These brave students have shown which side education should serve. My friends, you should come and join us too. Bring your education to us, and don’t turn your backs on the people. That’s the only way (Ngugi, 1980:205).

Although the workers are armed with sticks, clubs and iron rods, and they outnumber the robbers and thieves, the reader is told, “all of them had managed to flee, as if

they had suddenly grown wings of fear” (Ngugi, 1980:208). The robbers and thieves do not show any form of resistance and yet they are made to flee unscathed, suggesting that this is a mythical flight. The scene is reminiscent of Wariinga’s nightmare in which the devil is not allowed to suffer and die on the cross. Ngugi informs the reader:

After three days, there came others dressed in suits and ties, who, keeping close to the wall of darkness, lifted the Devil down from the Cross. And they knelt before him, and they prayed to him in loud voices, beseeching him to give them a portion of his robes of cunning. And their bellies began to swell, and they stood up, and they walked towards Wariinga, laughing at her, stroking their large bellies, which had now inherited all the evils of this world (Ngugi, 1980:13-14).

This scene is also reminiscent of Wangari’s arrest at the Devil’s feast. She shows the police who the real thieves are, yet the police turn around and arrest her and not the thieves. Later when Wangari, Muturi and the student leader are to face charges of disturbing the public peace during the Devil’s feast, the charges against them are withdrawn. However, immediately they get out of prison they are arrested again. Their arrest is an obvious perpetuation of what the student leader calls “the drinking of human blood, the eating of human flesh” (Ngugi, 1977:209). The student represents the youth who are a symbol of hope in every nation. If he is arrested, what hope is there that the youth can liberate Kenya from neo-colonialism. One gets the feeling that although Ngugi is against imperialism, he is somehow unconvinced that communism or Marxism may necessarily be the answer to man’s socio-economic challenges.

In *Matigari*, the desire for liberation from neo-colonialism is made explicit at a mass gathering called by the Minister for Truth and Justice when he declares the banning of all strikes by a presidential decree. Ngaruro wa Kiri, a worker at the factory, challenges the Minister by telling him the workers are withdrawing their labour from the market until the employers agree to meet their demands. When the Minister persuades the masses to ask him questions, Matigari ma Njiruungi confronts him and asks:

The builder builds a house.
The one who watched while it was being built moves into it.
The builder sleeps in the open air,

No roof over his head.

The tailor makes clothes.

The one who does not even know how to thread a needle wears the clothes.

The tailor walks in rags.

The tiller tends crops in the fields.

The one who reaps-where-he-never-sowed yawns for having eaten too much.

The tiller yawns for not having eaten at all.

The worker produces goods.

Foreigners and parasites dispose of them.

The worker is left empty handed.

Where are truth and justice on this earth? (Ngugi, 1989:113).

Matigari's question is once more an attack on the flaws and economic displacements that capitalism has created all over the world. Since the workers cannot be silenced easily, the state is forced to use its law enforcement agencies to maintain law and order. Matigari ma Njiruungi, Ngaruro wa Kiro, the teacher, and the student are locked up and tried by a mobile court for preaching Marxist doctrines to incite the workers to mutiny. When pronouncement is made that the student and the teacher are to be detained without trial the workers shout a defiance indicative of dissatisfaction and protest. The mobile court pronounces that both Matigari and Ngaruro wa Kiro be taken to a mental hospital. The latter shouts, "You may arrest me, but the workers will never stop demanding back their rights" (Ngugi, 1989:123), while the former tells the imperialists:

"I shall never stop struggling for all the products of my sweat. I shed blood and I did not shed it in vain. One day the land will return back to the tiller, and the wealth of our land to those who produce it. And you (Robert Williams and John Boy Junior) – with all your other lackeys, ministers and leaders of the police force, the army and the courts, the prisons and the administration – your days are numbered! I shall come back tomorrow. We are the patriots who survived: Matigari ma Njiruungi! And many more are being born each day. John Boy, you shall not sleep in my house again. It's either you or me and the future belongs to me" (Ngugi, 1989:124).

As soon as the police throw Matigari into the cell, the masses are triggered into action. They jeer the police as a sign of protest against the conviction of their messiah. They begin to sing:

Show me the way to a man
Whose name is Matigari ma Njiruungi,
Who stamps his feet to the rhythm of bells.
And the bullets jingle.
And the bullets jingle (Ngugi, 1989:125).

History has shown that when people have a burning desire to achieve a goal, they usually become fearless in spite of the threats by the authorities. Hence, even after the Minister for Truth and Justice and the Provincial Commissioner have warned the people not to sing, the author tells the reader, “but the people sang louder than ever before. Some started shouting for the release of Ngaruro wa Kiri. Others shouted slogans, ‘Down with theft and lies!’” (Ngugi, 1989:125). Realising that his efforts of a negotiated change would not yield any fruit, Matigari has no other choice but to turn to an armed struggle. The reader is told:

It dawned on him that one could not defeat the enemy with arms alone, but one could also not defeat the enemy with words alone. One has to have the right words; but these words had to be strengthened by the force of arms. In the pursuit of truth and justice one had to be armed with armed words (Ngugi, 1989:131).

Having taken this decision, Matigari removes the belt of peace he had worn earlier and tramples it down into the ground. Symbolically, he renounces all forms of peaceful negotiations in favour of an armed struggle. Ngugi (1989:245) himself, when asked about the novel’s theme of resistance and re-arming, remarks:

In relation not just to Kenya, but to Africa as a whole, *Matigari* is saying that neo-colonialism must end because Africa cannot possibly develop or find its true liberation while neo-colonialism holds sway; and a very important aspect of neo-colonialism is, of course, democratic repression. This is so because, without a real commitment to change – economically, politically and socially – people will inevitably become increasingly alienated from whichever social group is in power. That group in power then has no alternative but to resort to force: either you bring social change, or you use force to prevent it. And if you use force, the question is, what option are you giving the population? If you constantly repress the people (and in the case of Kenya, the level of repression is very high), what are you telling the

people to do? So, although in mythic form, the novel is very analytic; it is asking what options are available. And it is saying that if you follow a certain course, then you must accept the consequences of that course, because you cannot have your cake and eat it: you cannot close all avenues of debate and stifle democracy, yet not expect that people will find ways – whatever those ways – of fighting against that oppression.

It comes as no surprise then that after Matigari escapes from the mental hospital, when Muriuki and Guthera dissuade him from resorting to an armed struggle, he responds:

“You mean I should seal my life in a tomb of silence? That I should abandon all the produce of my head and hands? Leave everything to parasites? The labour of he-who-sows to them-who-never-sow? Whether they imprison, detain or kill us, they will never stop we who toil from struggling against those who only feed on our toil. Between producers and parasites, there will never be peace, or unity, or love. I will retrace my steps to where I went astray and resume my journey from there. I shall go and recover my weapons from under the tree. Then I shall claim my house with new might and right” (Ngugi, 1989:137-139).

Here Ngugi reinforces the seriousness with which the myth of a Kenyan country for Kenyans has always been regarded. In a melodramatic chase by the police, Matigari heads for John Boy’s house. The house is mysteriously set alight. Once Boy’s estate is aflame, the people start burning the other oppressors’ houses and property while singing:

Burn detention without trial – burn!
Burn detention without trial – burn!
Burn the exiling of patriots – burn!
Burn the exiling of patriots – burn!
Burn the prisons holding our patriotic students – burn!
Burn the prisons holding our patriotic students – burn!
Burn the prisons holding all our patriots – burn!
Burn the prisons holding all our patriots – burn!
Burn Parrotology – burn!
Burn Parrotology – burn! (Ngugi, 1989:168-169).

The use of repetition and exclamations in the song accentuates the quest the people have for freedom. The word “burn” has been used both at the beginning and end of each line to underline the unmitigated eradication of neo-colonialism. Matigari mysteriously escapes from the scene of the fire and heads for the *mugumo* tree to

retrieve his weapons. However, no sooner has he fled than the police track him down with their dogs which nearly tear him to death before he once more mysteriously disappears into the river. Nonetheless, his desire is to reach the *mugumo* tree, get his weapons and start the fight.

3.8 The Role Played by the Youth and Children in the Myth of Liberation from Neo-Colonialism

The liberation war in Kenya was not exclusively fought by older people without the involvement of the children. In *Weep Not, Child* some primary school boys express their aspirations to become freedom fighters as reflected in this conversation:

“But they are all the same? Fighting for the freedom of the black people.” This was said by a tall but weak boy. Then with a distant look in his eyes, “I would like to fight in the forest.”

All eyes were turned on him. He seemed to have said a very profound thing. Or seemed to have put in words what most of them felt. A solemn air hung over all the group. Then one other boy broke the silence by saying, “I too would like to fight. I would love to carry a big gun like my father used to do in the Big War when he fought for the British. Now I would be fighting for the black folk-”

“Hurrah and victory for the black folk!”

“Hurrah and victory for Jomo-”

“It rained last night” (Ngugi, 1964:73).

Innocent as they are, they already understand that African people are being oppressed by whites. They are not even aware of the minutiae of using guns or the niceties of war, yet they believe they can handle all these. Some of them may not have seen a gun in their lives yet they even envy carrying long range missiles. All this stems from of a dream and a wish to see their country liberated. When Joseph in *Petals of Blood* comments about the intended students’ strike against Chui in Siriana, he also tells Abdulla that they have decided that their studies should be related to the liberation of their people, an action which attests to their commitment to a meaningful change in their lives. Joseph himself is so inspired by what the Mau Mau movement has done for the Kenyan people and by the liberation struggles of other countries, that he tells Abdulla, “When I grow up and finish school and university I want to be like you: I would like to feel proud that I had done something for our people. You fought for the political independence of this country: I would like

to contribute to the liberation of the people of this country” (Ngugi, 1977:339). It is obvious that Joseph wants to liberate his people from neo-colonialism, thereby fulfilling the liberation myth.

In *Matigari*, Muriuki whose name, means “resurrection and rebirth” or “revolutionary change” (Biersteker, 1995:150) becomes Matigari’s “guide, shelter, and interpreter, throughout the novel. It is [he] who leads Ngaruro to Matigari when the latter is stoned by the children and [later] takes him to the bar where he meets Guthera” (*Ibid*). Muriuki helps to free Matigari from the prison and the mental hospital. When Matigari decides to go back to the *mugumo* tree to retrieve his weapons and resume the fight against the imperialists, Muriuki begs Matigari not to leave him behind. As Matigari cannot get to the *mugumo* tree in daylight for fear of being arrested, he finds refuge at the children’s scrapyard home. Muriuki’s friends keep guard of the Christ-like figure. The reader is told:

They [the children] arranged themselves so that some were strategically placed on the road, others at the shopping centre and others in the restaurants. They agreed that whoever saw the police would rush and inform the others. Those who were left behind were to collect heaps of stones. They were for defence, in case the police came to invade their village. They would defend the three while they slept. They were spoiling for a fight. Some of them started making catapults and slings (Ngugi, 1989:154).

In the evening the insurgent children accompany Matigari to John Boy’s house to support him. It is interesting that when the children ask him if he is the Lord who is to bring the New Jerusalem here on earth, Matigari insists that Christ is the dispossessed Kenyan masses including them, the children. He tells the children:

No. The God who is prophesied is in you, in me and the other humans. He has always been there inside us since the beginning of time. Imperialism has tried to kill that God within us. But one day that God will return from the dead. Yes, one day that god within us will come alive and liberate us who believe in Him. I am not dreaming.

He will return on the day when His followers will be able to stand up without worrying about tribe, race or colour, and say in one voice: Our labour produced all the wealth in this land. So from today onwards we refuse to sleep out in the cold, to walk about in rags, to go to bed on empty bellies. Let the earth return to those to whom it belongs. Let the soil return to the tiller, the factory to the worker ... But that God lives

more in you children of this land; and thereafter if you let the country go to the imperialist enemy and its local watchdogs, it is the same thing as killing that God who is inside you. It is the same thing as stopping Him from resurrecting. That God will come back only when you want Him to (Ngugi, 1989:156).

In the foregoing text Matigari inspires the children to fight against neo-colonialist cunning. Matigari is aware of the need to awaken and nurture the children's conscience, of the importance of resisting oppression if they have to live well. He is also aware that if there is any hope for the legacy of liberation, it is with the children and the youth. Hence, when Matigari is about to leave for the *mugumo* tree Muriuki tells him, "And bring me a pistol!" (Ngugi, 1989:157). This is the children's declaration of war against neo-colonialism. Consequently, when John Boy's house is later set alight, the children call for the burning of the neighbouring houses and property. They turn the call into a refrain:

Everything that belongs to these slaves must burn!
Yes, everything that belongs to these slaves must burn!
Their coffee must burn!
Yes, their coffee must burn!
Their tea must burn!
Yes their tea must burn! (Ngugi, 1989:167).

While the destruction of property continues Matigari magically flees but fails to reach the weapons when he desperately needs them. The imperial forces track him down with horses and dogs and fatally wound him although they fail to apprehend him. Once more, Matigari's wounding might be Ngugi's symbolic awareness of the complex challenges that Marxism and socialism versus capitalism are facing. In spite of Matigari's miraculous disappearance towards the close of the novel, it does not necessarily mean that the imperial powers remain absolutely confounded. Power is still in their hands as they have not been defeated. As Balogun (1995:194) asserts, "His ogres, though seriously shaken, [are] invincible in the end. If a hero as courageous and as supernaturally endowed as Matigari cannot change the status quo, what real hope is there of deliverance."

It is Muriuki, and not Matigari, who actually manages to reach the *mugumo* tree after the latter has been fatally wounded, a symbol that it is the children who will carry on with the struggle to free Kenya from the claws and shackles of neo-colonialism. As

Biersteker puts it, “Muriuki literally becomes Matigari in the concluding section of the novel as he returns to the *mugumo* tree and dons the weapons that Matigari has buried there” (Biersteker, 1995:150). In Njogu’s words, therefore, “children in literature and in the real world are generally seen as representing promise, hope, and optimism. They epitomize renewal and regeneration” (Njogu, 1995:129).

3.9.1 The role of Kenyan women in the liberation myth

Although women do not receive such profound attention with regard to the liberation activities, they have nevertheless been in the forefront since the early days of the British invasion of Kenya. In *Detained: A Writer’s Prison Diary* (1981:26-48), Ngugi acknowledges the contribution made by women in the liberation of Kenya. He points out that

Kenyan women too played their part: and the most remarkable of them all was Me Kitilili, the leader of the Giriama people’s resistance to the British occupation of their country. She was already an old woman when she organized Giriama youth into a fighting force that took the British military machine three years to subdue. Old as she was, she saw very clearly the political character of the armed struggle. She talked to the people about the theft of their land and labour. She talked about the evils of foreign occupation. She pointed out that the only solution was a united people’s armed struggle to kick out the enemy.

Kenyan women, like their male counterparts, have a dream for their country to be set free from British colonialism. Because of her dauntless military spirit, Me Kitilili was detained as a political prisoner in 1913, and on 14 January 1914, she and her fellow prisoners, “escaped from prison and with the help from friendly patriots of the other Kenyan nationalities, walked all the way back to the coast to continue the resistance” (Ngugi, 1981:48).

On 14 March 1922 when Harry Thuku was imprisoned in Nairobi for questioning the legitimacy of European domination, of the 7000 to 8000 people who had gathered outside the police station to demand his release, Kanogo (n.d) in her paper titled “Kikuyu women and the politics of protest: Mau Mau” maintains that “150 were women”. When African male leaders failed to negotiate the release of Thuku with the then secretary, Sir Charles Bowering, the women jeered and taunted the men. Then a

woman named Muthoni Nyanjiru challenged the men by exposing her genitals and dared them to exchange her dress for their trousers. Kanogo (n.d) aptly remarks:

By challenging men to give her their trousers – a symbol of manhood – Nyanjiru implied that men had proved incapable of dealing with the situation, and so women would take over and free Thuku. As a result of their action, leadership for the next few moments passed to the women. Nyanjiru's challenge and the sound of women's ululations in her support stopped the crowd from dispersing.

Turner (n.d), in an internet article titled "Nyabingi, Mau Mau and Rastafar: Genger and Internationalism in Twentieth Century Movements for a New Society", records that "Nyanjiru was one of the people to be killed by the colonialists in freedom fighting during the Thuku uprising". She died fighting, not only for Thuku's release, but for the liberation of the Kenyan people as a whole. In *A Grain of Wheat* Ngugi (1967:157) portrays Wambui as a woman whose "fighting spirit had never died"; who "believed in the power of women to influence events". He narrates the story of Wambui who during a workers' strike meant to paralyse the country and make it difficult for the white man to govern, men were reluctant to take a decisive decision until:

At the height of the proceedings, Wambui suddenly broke through the crowd and led a group of women to the platform. She grabbed the microphone from the speakers. People were interested. Was there any circumcised man who felt water in the stomach at the sight of a white man? Women, she said, had brought their Mithuru and Miengu to the platform. Let therefore such men, she jeered, come forward, wear the women's skirts and aprons and give up their trousers to the women. Men sat rigidly in their seats and tried to laugh with the crowd to hide their inner discomfort. The next day all men stayed away from work.

The foregoing extract is testimony to the fact that women have always had a strong drive to liberate Kenya from their colonisers by supporting their male counterparts.

The guerrillas believed that women were not physically fit to defend themselves against the enemy. Being the weaker sex they could not withstand the unpleasant and grating forest rains and colds. However, these myths were proven wrong when women joined men in the forest, although their motives for going there were varied. Kanogo (1987:146) states:

Some women fled to the forest for no other reason than to run away from the harassment of the Home Guards, but others went to avoid being arrested for previous Mau Mau activities. Guerrillas forced some women into the forest, where they performed whatever duties were allotted to them.

This claim is supported by Turner (n.d) in the aforementioned internet article, where she mentions that a number of women joined Mau Mau fighters “to avoid being sold off by their fathers as wives to pro-British home guards or loyalists”. Most women in the forest helped with cooking, cleaning, washing, collecting firewood, water and attending to the wounded and the sick. Moreover, as a law of nature, others were there to fulfil the sexual needs of their leaders even though it was taboo for guerrillas to sleep with women. Kanogo, in the aforementioned internet article, mentions a Mau Mau woman who comments that, “Generally, I would think of sleeping with a man as an individual concern. Here, it seems to me that the leaders considered that as part of the women’s duty in the society.” Some of the duties might appear petty-looking, but they were necessary and valuable for the welfare of the struggle for liberation.

Some women who went to the forest fought side by side with men in the forefront. In his introduction to *The Dedan Kimathi Papers*, Kinyatti (1987:9) quotes from a report sent to Dedan Kimathi by one of his cadres. It reads as follows:

To D. Kimathi:

Wamaitha joined my battalion in August 1953. I have given her permission to go home to Gethi on 1 November 1954 because she is pregnant with comrade Ruku as his wife. Due to her efficiency and patriotic commitment, I have promoted her to the rank of captain.

This letter attests to the fact that although women are generally associated with domestic chores, some fought side by side with their male counterparts during the Mau Mau struggle. This is supported by Kanogo (n.d) when she asserts that “some women helped in the making of weapons and ammunition, while others became fully-fledged warriors fighting alongside men”. In addition, Anderson (2005:247) reports that while the largest of Kimathi’s camps had a staff of nearly 400 women, a handful of these “joined the men in military training and took part in raids”. In *A Grain of Wheat*, (Ngugi, 1967:89), when Njeri learns of Kihika’s flight to the forest, stands

alone in the dark outside her home, looking in the direction of Kinenie Forest and shouts:

“He is there,” she whispered to herself. Then she addressed him directly with a passionate devotion. “You are my warrior.” She raised her voice, letting loose her long suppressed anger. “She does not love you Kihika. She does not care.” She walked a few more steps and then wheeled round, willing the waves of the dark to carry her declaration of eternal devotion to Kihika.

“I will come to you, my handsome worrier, I will come to you,” she cried, and she ran into her mother’s hut trembling with the knowledge that she had made an irrevocable promise to Kihika.

It is apparent that Njeri despises Wambuku’s weakness as a woman, as well as her (Wambuku’s) lack of a fighting spirit. Subsequently she regards Wambuku as an unsuitable match to Kihika. Even though Njeri flees to Kihika to find love, she joins him to fight the enemy side by side with him as Ngugi (1967:121) relates, “Anyway, not until she ran away to the forest to fight at Kihika’s side. She was shot dead in a battle, soon after Kihika’s death.” This evinces the fact that women, like men, have the courage to sustain the myth to get their country liberated from the British.

Other women rendered what one would name indispensable support services. The Mau Mau liberation struggle was not restricted to the men and women in the Kenyan forests and mountains. Turner (n.d) remarks that “women of all ages and all walks of life participated in the Mau Mau war. Grandmothers – old, old women were involved. No one would suspect a grandmother. Walking sticks in hand, they would take all kinds of things into the forest.” Kanogo (1987:143) calls these women, “the civil wing, the life line without which the forest freedom fighters would [not] have been able to exist”. Unlike men, women were less harassed by the security forces and had more freedom of movement. This made them invaluable agents of information as well as carriers of food, ammunition and firearms. In *Petals of Blood*, Wanja’s sister is reputed to have assisted Mau Mau men in the forest. With a tone of concern her mother complains, “Your sister is helping the Mau Mau. Can’t you tell her, can’t you remind her what happened to her husband when he was caught with home-made guns?” (Ngugi, 1977:233). Kanogo (1981:143) mentions that “women took the opportunity of gathering firewood to pass on vital information and supplies to freedom fighters, especially in the areas bordering the forests”. This was an expedient venture especially after the government villagization programme had been introduced and

security trenches dug around the forest edges to prevent the freedom fighters as well as the civilians from accessing the villages and the forest respectively. In *A Grain of Wheat* Ngugi (1967:19) describes a Wambui who during the Emergency “carried secrets from the villages to the forest and back to the villages and towns [and] knew the underground movements in Nakuru, Njoro, Elburgon and other places in and outside the Rift Valley”. This is a serious involvement usually least expected from a woman. Ngugi further recounts how Wambui carried a pistol tied to her thighs near the groin, to Naivasha, and how she outwitted the police who wanted to search her:

She was dressed in long, wide and heavy clothes, the picture of decrepitude and senile decay.[As her turn to be searched came], her tooth started aching; she twisted her lips, moaned; saliva tossed out of the corners of her mouth and flowed down her chin. [As the policeman] rummaged under her armpits, gradually working his way down towards the vital spot, Wambui screamed, [and] the man stopped astonished.

“The children of these days, have you lost all shame? Just because the white man tells you so, you would actually touch your own mother’s ... the woman who gave you birth? All right, I’ll lift the clothes and you can have a look at your mother, it is so aged, and see what gain it’ll bring you for the rest of your life.”

She actually made as if to lift her clothes and expose her nakedness. The man involuntarily turned his eyes away (Ngugi, 1967:19).

Wambui’s story validates the commitment that the women have to help get their country liberated from colonialism. Wangari in *Devil on the Cross* also confesses to her fellow travellers how she had been involved in the Mau Mau activities in her youth, “I, the Wangari you see before you, was a small girl then. But these legs have carried many bullets and many guns to our fighters in the forest ... and I was never afraid, even when I slipped through the lines of the enemy and their home guard allies” (Ngugi, 1980:40).

It is apparent that women could invent any trick for the success of the movement. Daigle (2008:1) declares that “the women were clever enough to keep up the appearance of normal everyday life even though they may have been hiding Mau Mau fighters or even involved in a plot themselves”. Turner (n.d) alleges that “in the cities prostitutes used their establishments as safe houses, and provided the Mau Mau Land Freedom Army with money, intelligence and arms. Women traders used

the railroad and markets as networks of communication.” Women also contributed significantly to the struggle by providing the freedom fighters with money, clothes and other necessities. Kanogo (1981:145) affirms that

Wanjiru Nyamaratu continued to raise money on a provincial basis. With the help of other movement members, both men and women, clothes, medicine, scrap metal for making rifles, bottles for making ammunition, were bought and passed on to needy freedom fighters. Coats, rifles and ammunition were solicited from sympathetic soldiers, while medical aid and supplies were obtained, mainly from auxiliary staff at the District Hospital in Nakuru.

To conclude, the involvement of women in the Mau Mau struggle against the settlers provides ample evidence that although they might be regarded as physically weak, they had a strong desire to be liberated from British colonialism. In their own ways they contributed to the success of the struggle.

3.9.2 Liberation of women from patriarchal domination

The reader comes across Muthoni’s defiant character during circumcision time, when young men and women have to be initiated into manhood and womanhood respectively. Among the Kenyan people clitoridectomy was a ritual the Gikuyu people could not do without. For instance, Kenyatta (1938:138) in *Facing Mount Kenya* mentions that:

In the matrimonial relation, the *rite de passage* is the deciding factor. No proper Gikuyu would dream of marrying a girl who has not been circumcised, and vice versa. It is taboo for a Gikuyu man or woman to have sexual relations with someone who has not undergone this operation. If it happens, a man or woman must go through a ceremonial purification, *korutwo thahu* or *gotahikio megiro* – namely, ritual vomiting of the evil deeds.

It is apparent that the ritual is associated with cleansing and rebirth, implying that anyone who has neglected the ritual would culturally be regarded as unclean. Kenyatta (1938:133) further states that any man who married an uncircumcised woman did not have the “blessings of the family and the clan” and was subsequently forced to divorce the said wife or faced being “turned out and disinherited”. Anderson (2005:19) adds that, “without clitoridectomy there would be no transfer of

bridalwealth – the exchange of livestock and goods given to the family of the bride by the family of the groom”.

While the Gikuyu people lived by this custom, the missionaries, together with the newly converted Christians, found clitoridectomy a repugnant practice, creating a clash between tribal life and Christianity. Although Muthoni knows her father's attitude towards circumcision, she confides her intention to be circumcised to her sister Nyambura. When Nyambura objects for fear of their father's rage, Muthoni vehemently protests:

“Why! Are we fools?” She shook Nyambura. “Father and mother are circumcised. Are they not Christians? Circumcision did not prevent them from being Christians. I too have embraced the white man's faith. However, I know it is beautiful, oh so beautiful to be initiated into womanhood. You learn the ways of the tribe. Yes, the white man's God does not quite satisfy me. I want, I need something more. My life and your life are here, in the hills, that you and I know” (Ngugi, 1965:26).

Subsequently Muthoni flees to her aunt in Kamenno to get her dream fulfilled, and does not surrender to her father's appeal to come back. Sadly Muthoni's wound becomes septic and she dies on arrival at the hospital. However, Muthoni dies a fulfilled person, having achieved her heart's longing, as she clearly articulates to Waiyaki, “tell Nyambura I see Jesus. And I am a woman, beautiful in the tribe” (Ngugi, 1965:53). Cloete (1996:93) too states that “She thus dies, convinced that her adherence to the tribal rituals, especially to that of circumcision, would enable her to experience self-fulfilment.”

Wanja is both a complex and controversial character, perhaps because of multiple figures compounded in one personality. She is a school girl, a barmaid, a prostitute, a business woman, and a philosopher at times. After being impregnated by the rich old man (Kimeria), she disappears into Eastleigh where she turns into a prostitute. She gets tired of this life and decides to go and live with her grandmother, Nyakinyua, in Ilmorog so that she can break with the past, start a new life and be useful to other people as revealed:

Wanja had made a pact with herself. She would have a completely new beginning in Ilmorog. Since she left Ilmorog she had two

humiliating and shameful experiences. She would now break with that past and make something of herself in Ilmorog. As an evidence of her cleansed spirit, she resolved that she would not again obey the power of her body over men; that any involvement was out until she had defeated the past through a new flowering of self (Ngugi, 1977:106-107).

However, circumstances such as the death of her grandmother, Karega's escape, and the fact that Mzigo, Chui and Kimeria become the directors of the Chiri County Council, let her revert to her former life of whoredom. In this way she formally becomes what Roos (2002:154-170) calls "an employer, a capitalist, and a tourist attraction". She runs a brothel which is ironically named Sunshine Lodge as her conversation with Karega and Munira demonstrates:

"I could hardly accept this twist of fate. But I started thinking ... Kimeria, who made his fortune as a Home Guard transporting bodies of Mau Mau killed by the British, was still prospering ... Kimeria, who had ruined my life and later humiliated me by making me sleep with him during our journey to the city ... this same Kimeria was one of those who would benefit from the new economic progress of Ilmorog. Why? Why? I asked myself. Why? Why? Had he not sinned as much as me? That is how one night I fully realized this law. Eat or you are eaten. If you have a cunt, excuse my language, but it seems the curse of Adam's Eve of those who are born with it – if you are born with this hole, instead of it being a source of pride, you are doomed to either marrying someone or else being a whore" (Ngugi, 1977:293).

Karega does not believe her cynicism and accuses her of teaming up with the imperialists against the masses. She, however, tells him she has tried to fight them, "the only way I can" (Ngugi, 1977:327), meaning by using her sexual powers. However, as Ogude (1999:117) maintains, she does not only "prostitute her body, but put those of other women into her service". The fact that Wanja admits to herself that prostitution is "a career of always being trodden upon, a career of endless shame and degradation" (Ngugi, 1977:329), means she is aware that she has not necessarily liberated herself from both male domination and imperialist forces. She has messed up her body with different men, making them pay heavily, thinking she had control over them, yet corrupting herself and others. She tells Munira and Karega, "And me? Me too! I have not spared myself. It has been the only way I can get my own back on Chui, Mzigo, and Kimeria ... and, strange ... they pay for it ... they pay for their rivalry to possess me. As for me, it's a game ... of money ... you

eat, or you are eaten” (Ngugi, 1977:293). Hence she becomes unhappy about the riches she has accumulated as she tells Karega, “this wealth feels so heavy on my head” (Ngugi, 1977:327). Wanja now feels that although her trade has made her a success, she has done it at the expense of her moral values and as Ogude (1999:117) puts it, “for Ngugi prostitution becomes a symbol of degradation rather than liberty”. Politically too, she has supported the ideologies and values of capitalism instead of throwing in her lot and struggle with her own people. Roos (2002:154-170) also argues that “Ngugi cannot condone the prostitute’s actions or see her as anything other than exploitation of Africa and African peoples and resources.”

One could argue that Wanja’s liberation comes when Munira burns down her brothel. It should be recalled that fire has a cleansing effect in Wanja’s life. She decides to quit her profession and then falls pregnant, an act which Ogude (1999:120) argues, “is allegorical of national rebirth and regeneration”, the ultimate fulfilment of the Kenyan myth.

In *Devil on the Cross*, Wariinga, like Wanja and Guthera, is sexually used and abused and later dropped by the rich old man of Ngorika once he learns that she is pregnant. Fortunately, after giving birth she completes her secretarial studies and is employed at Champion Construction Company where Kihara is her boss. Wariinga is dismissed from her job “for rejecting the advances of Boss Kihara, her employer” (Ngugi, 1980:10). Wariinga demonstrates that she has control over her own body and cannot be used at any man’s will. Kihara’s myth is that since Wariinga is a woman she cannot refuse his advances in order to keep her job. At home, her husband, John Kimwana, abandons her after having falsely accused her of being Kihara’s mistress. He does this without evidence except the belief in the myth that he is a man and, therefore, his decision cannot be challenged by a woman. Wariinga decides to be self-reliant and as Ngugi informs the reader, she “[plunges] into the middle of the arena of life’s struggles in order to discover her real strength and to realize her true humanity” (Ngugi, 1980:216). She enrolls at the Polytechnic to study engineering, historically considered to be men’s territory, another myth to be dismantled by Ngugi’s works. Owing to the myth associating engineering with masculinity, her presence is seen as an anomaly and her male counterparts literally

laugh at her. However, this laughter quickly stops when she proves their expectations wrong with her outstanding performance. Ogude argues that the liberation of women should not be based on their struggle to do subjects such as Mathematics or Engineering. As he puts it, “women’s liberation requires more than just the acquisition of masculine values” (1999:116). However, he fails to clarify which values he refers to. Financially, Wariinga has to pay for her studies out of her own pocket since financial institutions and sponsors are also prejudiced against females invading male territories. When Gatuiria, son of the rich old man of Ngorika, offers to help with her fees and rent, she refuses because, “she [does] not want to bind herself to [him] or to anyone else with strings of gratitude for charity” (Ngugi, 1980:219). Wariinga also attends judo and karate classes to defend herself in case of an attack. Although judo and karate were traditionally regarded as masculine sports, Wariinga ventures into them. This acquired skill becomes useful to her on a day when a male co-worker attempts to fondle her breasts and buttocks without her consent. As Ngugi informs the reader, “Wariinga turned like lightning, and in a twinkling of an eye, she had assaulted him with so many judo kicks and karate chops that for a time he saw stars” (Ngugi, 1980:221). Wariinga qualifies as a “mechanical engineer who specializes in motor vehicles and other internal combustion engines, an expert at fitting and turning, at forging and welding, at shaping metal to suit a variety of purposes” (Ngugi, 1980:218). This is an achievement *par excellence* if we consider the myth that this has traditionally been a male domain. Uwasomba (2006:5) asserts that “the realization of Wariinga’s life ambition to train as an automobile engineer goes a long way to show how the underprivileged in the society have worked hard to improve their condition, in spite of the brutal attempts by the powers that be to reduce them to nothingness”.

Wariinga is an example of women who are not easily satisfied with small achievements. On the day Gutuiria, her lover, takes her to his parents, she unfolds her intentions to address the plight of rural women. She tells Gutuiria about her plan “to design and build a simple machine that would exploit the greatest source of energy on the earth – solar energy” (Ngugi, 1980:245). Historically science is also an area that belonged to the masculine world and Wariinga wants to demystify the long-standing tradition. Wariinga is convinced of this dream and she no longer sees it as a hope, but a reality. As she speaks to Gatuiria:

“The dawn of new and more productive things to come.”
 “Let’s hope so!” Wariinga said, but after a pause, she took back what she had said: “No, let’s not be content with hoping. We aren’t going to wait for things to happen by themselves any longer. Why can’t we make things happen the way we want them to happen?”
 “Let’s make them happen then,” said Gatuiria.
 “Let’s make them happen,” Wariinga repeated.
 “The revolution of the Iregi rebels!”
 “A new beginning for a new Earth!” Wariinga said.
 “So be it!” Gatuiria shouted, pressing his right foot hard on the accelerator (Ngugi, 1980:246).

Wariinga kills Gitahi, the rich old man of Ngorika and Gatuiria’s father, as well as Kihaahu wa Gatheeca and Gitutu wa Gataanguri, not as revenge for having ruined her life but for the liberation of mankind from the manacles of neo-colonialism. This is so because when Gatuiria hears the gunshots and asks what has happened, Wariinga replies, “There kneels a jigger, a louse, a weevil, a flea, a bedbug! He is a mistletoe, a parasite that lives on the trees of other people’s lives!” (Ngugi, 1980:254). These words apply less to her ruined relationship with Gitahi as a person, but more to the unjust social order. Wariinga takes the side of the workers in their protest against imperialism by killing those who embrace and worship it. Even after this cathartic act, Ngugi reminds the reader that, “she knew with all her heart that the hardest struggles of her life’s journey lay ahead” (Ngugi, 1980:254). This is a statement that clearly evinces the toll the imperial forces will take on Wariinga and the magnitude this social order has reached.

3.10 Ngugi and the Myth of Nation Building

The issue of nation building is not stressed in Mahfouz’s *The Cairo Trilogy* as it is in the novels of Ngugi and Mda. I have already indicated that al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad would rather keep all his daughters at home than send them to school, an element that is detrimental to nation building. As *The Cairo Trilogy* covers the entire period of Egypt’s struggle for independence, al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad’s son, Fahmy gets involved in the revolutionary activities, but al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad is opposed to that and commands the son to abandon politics:

“Now I want to know whether my command is going to be obeyed?”

The young man quickly replied, "Most certainly, Papa."

"Then break every link between you and the revolution ... Even if your role was limited to distributing handbills to your best friends" (Mahfouz, 1957:453).

In spite of al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad's command, Fahmy does not retreat from the revolutionary activities as Mahfouz (1957:453) states, "No power in existence could come between him and his patriotic duty. He absolutely would not retreat even one step. The time for that had passed, never to return."

Al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad is disappointed with Kamal's ambition to enrol in the Teachers Training College rather than studying law or something else more promising as he mentions:

"Do you know anything about teaching or is your information limited to the Teachers College? It's a miserable profession, which wins respect from no one ... It's one utterly devoid of grandeur or esteem. I'm acquainted with men of distinction and with civil servants who have flatly refused to allow their daughters to marry a teacher, no matter how high his rank" (Mahfouz, 1957:586-7).

Nonetheless, Kamal goes ahead with his choice and we later find him devoted to the Darwinian philosophy of human evolution which enrages al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad. But Kamal knows that he cannot remain trapped in the limited world of his father.

In Ngugi's *Weep Not, Child* on the day Jacobo finds Njoroge with Mwahika, his daughter, in his (Jacobo's) house, after Njoroge has told Jacobo of his plans to go to High School, the latter responds, "I hope you do well. It is such as you who must work hard and rebuild the country" (Ngugi, 1964:92). That very afternoon he and Mwihaki deliberate on the issue of peace in the land as reflected:

"Peace shall come to this land!" ...

"Oh, Njoroge, do you really think so?" She said, creeping near him as if he was the comfort himself.

"Yes. Sunshine always follows a dark night. We sleep knowing and trusting that the sun will rise tomorrow." He liked this piece of reasoning. But he was rather annoyed when she laughingly said, "Tomorrow. Tomorrow never comes. I would rather think of today" (Ngugi, 1964:95).

In the above conversation while Njoroge is aware of the struggle for liberation, he is optimistic about the future. It is, however, ironic because the dream he has will soon be shattered owing to the war the Mau Mau has been waging against the white government. Consequently, the conversation becomes sadder because the person speaking is an innocent child.

Just before Njoroge goes to Siriana Secondary School, he again meets Mwhaki. It is equally strange that while Mwhaki is pessimistic about the future, she is interested in Njoroge's future plans after completing his studies and the following conversation ensues:

"Our country has great need of us."

"Do you think the country really needs you?"

"Yes," he said rather irritably. Was she doubting him? "The country needs me. It needs you. And the remnant. We must get together and rebuild the country. That was what your father told me the day that I was at your home."

"The country is so dark now," she whispered to herself.

"The sun will rise tomorrow," he said triumphantly, looking at her as if he would tell her that he would never lose faith, knowing as he did that God had a secret plan.

"You are always talking about tomorrow, tomorrow. You are always talking about *the* country and *the* people. What is tomorrow? And what is *the People* and *the Country* to you?" (Ngugi, 1967:106).

The sentence, "The country is so dark now" is suggestive of the gloomy atmosphere that has been created by the struggle for liberation. It is unfortunate that some people like Mwhaki become cynical and disillusioned owing to the relentless and indiscriminate killings. Nevertheless, Njoroge still holds on to the myth that things will change for the better, hence he continues to tell Mwhaki:

"Don't be angry, Mwhaki. For what can I say now? You and I can only put faith in hope. Just stop for a moment, Mwhaki, and imagine. If you knew that all your days life will always be like this with blood flowing daily and men dying in the forest, while others daily cry for mercy; if you knew even for one moment that this would go on forever, then life would be meaningless unless bloodshed and death were a meaning. Surely this darkness and terror will not go on for ever. Surely there will be a sunny day, a warm sweet day after all this tribulation, when we can breathe the warmth and purity of God ..." (Ngugi, 1964:106).

Waiyaki in *The River Between* is seriously concerned with nation-building. Through education and the building of schools Waiyaki tries to unite the two ridges, Kamenno and Makuyu which from the onset the reader is told they are antagonistic and “they faced each other, like two rivals ready to come to blows in a life and death struggle for the leadership of this isolated region” (Ngugi, 1965:1). Kamenno has actually become the stronghold of Christianity while Makuyu belongs to the traditionalists.

When there is a crisis among the Kikuyu communities, brought about by clitoridectomy, and children whose parents fail to renounce the practice are expelled from Christian schools, Waiyaki returns home to set up his own school, Marioshoni, “the first people’s own school” (Ngugi, 1965:67) in order to build the nation. Waiyaki is not worried that he receives little compensation for his work. His heart yearns for “schools and more schools [getting] the white man’s education ... But Waiyaki would not be satisfied with just more schools. Later he would like a college” (Ngugi, 1965:82). The establishment of a college guarantees the training and constant supply of teachers, and will, therefore, provide better learning and teaching. Waiyaki’s vision is to see an educated tribe yet not divorced from its rituals and customs. It is the same principle Waiyaki would like to see with Christianity as he contemplates:

For Waiyaki knew that not all the ways of the white man were bad. Even his religion was not essentially bad. Some good, some truth shone through it. But the religion, the faith, needed washing, cleaning away all the dirt, leaving only the eternal. And that eternal that was the truth had to be reconciled with the traditions of the people. A people’s traditions could not be swept away overnight. That way lay disintegration. Such a tribe would have no roots, for a people’s roots were in their traditions going back to the past, the very beginning, Gikuyu and Mumbi. A religion that took no account of people’s ways of life, a religion that did not recognize spots of beauty and truth in their way of life, was useless. It would not satisfy. It would not be a living experience, a source of life and vitality. It would only maim a man’s soul, making him fanatically cling to whatever promised security, otherwise he would be lost. Perhaps that was what was wrong with Joshua. He had clothed himself with a religion decorated and smeared with everything white. He renounced his past and cut himself away from those life-giving traditions of the tribe. And because he had nothing to rest upon, something rich and firm on which to stand and grow, he had to cling with his hands to whatever the missionaries taught him promised future (Ngugi, 1965:141).

Waiyaki also wants to use education as a means to unite Makuyu and Kameno ridges after their long standing tribal and religious conflicts: "Every day he was becoming convinced of the need for unity between Kameno and Makuyu. The ancient rivalry would cripple his efforts. He also wanted a reconciliation between Joshua's followers and the others (Ngugi, 1965:91). It is this conviction that makes him ask Kinuthia to call a meeting of all the people so that he can preach to them, "Education for unity. Unity for political freedom ... Education, Unity, Political Freedom" (Ngugi, 1965:143). It is, however, regrettable that while Waiyaki plans to embark on this venture to save himself from the Kiama he is unaware that it is too late. He should have heeded the voice of the Kiama long before and not allowed himself to be blinded by his ambition to build more schools.

After Kenya's Independence Day, during a post-mortem of the previous day's events, Wambui, Warui and Mumbi realize that they have responsibilities to attend to in order to start rebuilding the nation as evidenced in the following conversation:

"I must go now. I'm sure the fire is ready at home. Perhaps we should not worry too much about the meeting ... or ... about Mugo. We have got to live."

"Yes, we have the village to build," Warui agreed.

"And the market tomorrow, and the fields to dig and cultivate ready for the next season," observed Wambui, her eyes trying to see beyond the drizzle and the mist.

"And children to look after," finished Mumbi (Ngugi, 1967:210).

In the foregoing conversation the three women are conscious of the fact that for their country to grow, they have to go out and cultivate the farms and embark on trading activities for the economy to be strong. They are also aware that children have to be looked after. Every community regards children as a symbol and hope of the future, hence the necessity to nurture them well by providing for their physical and emotional needs, a task which Mumbi will have to carry alone for her son's wellness. The drizzle and mist which prevent Wambui from seeing clearly suggest the uncertainty the future holds for them.

In conclusion, one feels that Ngugi accentuates the importance of Kenyan myths in his first novels, namely the myth that the Kenyans have to own their land, the myth that Christianity will not wipe out traditional belief and that women are supposed to

be inferior to men. In post-colonial Kenya he again gives the reader an illusion that although the peasants and workers have the capacity to liberate the world from the imperialists, their efforts are in vain. In both *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*, even though the imperialists' compradors are burnt to ashes and shot at by Munira, Wanjia, Abdulla, Karega, and Wariinga respectively, the law, which is on the side of the government, still has to take action against them. Matigari fails to reach the *mugumo* tree where he has hidden his weapons and nothing happens to the state security forces. The impression left to the reader is that the struggle against neo-colonialism is fruitless, the imperialists will continue to drink human blood and to eat human flesh, thereby destroying the Kenyan major myth of owning their own land. The coming chapter will be looking at the myths in Zakes Mda's works and how people are liberated from their different forms of bondage.

CHAPTER 4 : Zakes Mda

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on three of Zakes Mda's novels, namely, *Ways of Dying* (1995) *The Heart of Redness* (2000), and *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2002) and how they deal with the liberation myth during the colonial period as well as post-independence South Africa. *Ways of Dying*, set in the violence-ridden transitional years before the first democratic elections, recounts the odysseys of both Toloki and Noria who come to the bogus, "wondrous world of freedom and riches" (Mda, 1995:59), "to search for love and fortune" (Mda, 1995:60). Instead, they find each other and help to heal the past of each other's wounds. *The Heart of Redness* deals with the wars between the amaXhosa and the British, which are interrupted by Nongqawuse's messianic but self-destructive cattle-killing myth from the ancestors. The amaXhosa were split into Believers and Unbelievers who were blamed for the failure of the myth. One hundred and fifty years later, the war between the Believers and the Unbelievers, represented by Zim and Bhonco respectively, rages on in Qolorha-by-Sea. While the Unbelievers yearn for economic development, the Believers want preservation of their heritage, and they prevail. *The Madonna of Excelsior* confronts the myth around the notorious Immorality Act and how the 1971 case, in which nineteen citizens of Excelsior were charged for breaking it, and how Niki and Popi, the victims of the said act, ultimately find an uneasy peace in the newly free state. The story also deals with the post-apartheid era in the nurturing of the South Africa's young democracy.

Like the preceding chapters, this chapter will further investigate the different myths linked to land alienation, racial prejudice and male domination in Mda's three novels. In addition, issues of reconciliation after the demise of the South African apartheid regime will be assessed.

4.2 The South African Myth

Mda expands the South African myth from two racial perspectives. From the African perspective the South African myth is contained in an ideal cherished by the former South African President Nelson Mandela (Crwys-Williams, 2010:172), delivered from

the dock during the Rivonia Treason Trial on 20 April 1964 when he unambiguously stated:

“I have fought against white domination, and have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.”

The Freedom Charter also spells out what has been the wishes of the majority of the African people in general. Amongst others, the following seem to be the pillars of their beliefs and, therefore, an articulation of the South African myth:

- The people shall govern.
- All national groups shall have equal rights.
- The people shall share in the country's wealth.
- All shall be equal before the law.
- All shall enjoy equal human rights.

Former President Nelson Mandela mentions in his inaugural speech, <http://public.wsu.edu/~wldciv/worl-civ-reader-2/mandela.html>, delivered on 11 May 1994: “Never and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another and suffer the indignity of being the skunk of the world.” This articulates the highest aspiration of the majority of South African black people.

On the other hand, some of the white colonizers and their descendants had clung to the myth that they were God's chosen people, elected to own the land and educate the blacks inferiorly. Their dream was to create an Afrikaner-dominated republic with all powers in the hands of the minority few, subsequently we find the Apartheid regime that came into power in 1948 and promulgated the Population Registration Act. *The World Book Encyclopaedia* states “the cornerstone of apartheid was the Population Registration Act (1950), under which all South Africans were classified according to race. Separate schools, separate universities, separate residential areas and separate public facilities were established for each race groups.” This view is affirmed by Tjaart Cronje in *The Madonna of Excelsior*. His prejudice against

blacks and disillusionment about the current political status make him see the blacks as hopeless failures as he claims, "But how can the blacks share power with the white man in our own country?" asked Tjaart Cronje. "What does a black man know about power? All he knows is how to burn down schools" (Mda, 2002:149). This is a clash of the two myths symbolic of clashes that have existed between Whites and Blacks since the inception of the apartheid government and up to 1994 when South Africa held its first democratic elections.

4.3 Circumstances Leading to the Liberation Myth

When the British settlers invaded the Cape Colony, as has been noted in the preceding chapter, there was displacement of the indigenous peoples as they were forcefully removed from the fertile lands they had occupied from time immemorial. Kissack and Titlestad (2009:153) point out that

This controversial and catastrophic event can be interpreted as a desperate attempt by the Xhosa people to secure deliverance from the cumulative pressure of frontier wars with white settlers on the Cape's Eastern Frontier, which deprived them of much of their traditional land and compressed them into the diminishing territory between the encroaching eastern border of the Cape Colony and the Pondo people to the east of the Xhosa.

Peires (1986:444) asserts that in the Cape Colony, "large tracts of Xhosa territory were lost in the Frontier wars of 1812 and 1819, and in 1847 about half of Xhosaland was annexed to the British Empire under the name of British Kaffraria". For instance, Twin-Twin protests to Ned about Sir George Grey, nicknamed The Man who Named Ten Rivers, "Don't tell me about The Man Who Named Ten Rivers. Like all the others he is a thief. Just as he stole the land of the people of countries across the seas, he stole the land of the amaXhosa and gave it to the amaMfengu. He stole more of our land to settle more of his people" (Mda, 2000:96).

Grey's annexation of land was conducted under the auspices of British civilization and pacification of the alien cultures as the conversation between Twin-Twin and John Dalton evinces:

"But he is taking more and more of the land of the amaXhosa."
Complained Twin-Twin.

“What is land compared to civilization?” asked Dalton impatiently. Land is a small price to pay for a gift that will last you a lifetime ... that will be enjoyed by your future generations. The gift of British civilization!” (Mda, 2000:141)

The amaXhosa were indoctrinated into believing that land was of little value to them, a trifle that could be disposed of with little or no consideration. In spite of this, the amaXhosa were not tricked to believe such patent lies, hence the persistent protestation made by Twin-Twin, “The Man Who Named Ten Rivers’ civilising mission is taking food from the mouths of our children” (Mda, 2000:141). In rejecting Sir George Grey’s policies, Harry Sewlall (2003:333) points out, “His attempt to apply the land policy he had developed in New Zealand, where land was plentiful, was unwisely applied to the Eastern Cape frontier where his plans to penetrate tribal land with white-owned farms were resented as were his plans to substitute European for traditional cultural values.”

In *The Madonna of Excelsior* the Afrikaners such as Johannes Smit are also said to be in possession of lands “that were as big as a small country” (Mda, 2002:126). They too were bent on hoarding the wealth of the country while blacks were immersed in the chasm of poverty. All these utterances are a concern registering the desire of the black people to be liberated from their colonizers.

Besides land annexation notorious racist and oppressive colonial activities of governors such as Sir Harry Smith have also been recorded. Sir Harry Smith, who called himself the Great White Chief of the Xhosas, is alleged to have “commanded the elders and even the chiefs of kwaXhosa to kiss his staff and his boots” (Mda, 2000:18) as a sign of submission. This is an instance of the working of the myth of white supremacy and superiority, a show-off that the defeated black people, even if they might be holding high positions such as chieftaincy, are powerless and can, therefore, be treated as objects or animals. Mda further informs the reader, “The Great White Chief was running wild all over the lands of the amaXhosa, doing whatever he liked in the name of Queen Victoria of England. He even deposed Sandile, the king of the amaXhosa-ka-Nggika” (Mda, 2000:18), for refusing to meet him. Obviously, the despicable treatment of these chiefs and their subjects did not generate healthy relationships as Davenport (1988:133) comments about Smith:

Smith's self-confidence knew almost no bounds ... His magistrates might contain the situation for a while, and create the illusion of peace; but underneath there was smouldering resentment among the subjects of expropriated chiefs and a good deal of inertia among those ordered to move out.

This smouldering resentment incensed the amaXhosa to act against the colonialists with the hope of reclaiming what was duly theirs.

Sir George Grey's "civilization by mingling" (Mda, 2000:135) policy required other nationalities to abandon their long-standing cultural heritage in favour of his. For this reason, Mda comments:

Grey believed that all men were equal – well, almost equal – as long as they adopted a civilised mode of dress and decent habits. Grey was interested in the health and education of the amaXhosa – that was why he established schools and the Native Hospital. Grey was a great lover of the amaXhosa nation, and was interested in their folk stories, in their animals and in their plants. Instead of being derisively called The Man Who Named Ten Rivers, Grey should be called The Great Benefactor of the Non-European Peoples of the World. Grey was a wonderful man whose only motive for coming to and ruling the land of the amaXhosa was to change the customs of the barbarous natives and introduce them to British civilization. The land that he had grabbed in the process was really a very small price to pay for the wonderful gift of civilization (Mda, 2000:96).

Sir George Grey's belief in men's equality is reminiscent of George Orwell's *Animal Farm* in which all men start by being equal but along the way this status soon changes when some become more equal than others. Equality is not based on the fact that all human beings are God's creation, but on their successes or failures. A nonentity in Sipho Sepamla's poem, "Da Same, Da Same" challenges this ridiculous hypothesis when he remarks:

I mean for sure now
all da peoples is make like God
an' da God I knows for sure
He make avarybudy wit' one heart

for sure now did heart go-go da same
dats for meaning to say

one man no diflent to anader (*The Blues Is You In Me*).

It is apparent that even the schools Sir George Grey established, the forerunners of the notorious Bantu Education, meant to change the black people's "barbaric" customs while offering them inferior education to keep them as underdogs for the rest of their lives by perpetrating subservience amongst them and by indoctrinating them to view British civilization as superior to theirs. Ironically, this attitude kindled the acrimony towards the colonizers. The same argument can also be levelled against the Native Hospital whose services would be mediocre in spite of Grey's claim about all men being equal. At a time when Grey intended to visit Chief Nxito and his councillors to announce his peace settlement during the cattle killing period, Dalton tells him, "He just wants to talk to the chiefs about the affairs of the nation, and to discuss with you the benefits of accepting British rule *without question or rebellion*" (Mda, 2000:142-143). The British view themselves as a cut above the amaXhosa, therefore, nobody should have moral justification to interrogate their rule. Owing to the British obsession with their perceived superiority, they had little respect for other peoples' long-standing sovereignties that they defied negotiating with them. The amaXhosa were in essence regarded as children who had to accept things without question, as the reader is told that

The British government was coming with a new administrative system, devised by the governor himself. He made it clear that the chiefs had no option but to accept it. He had already visited a number of them privately, each in his own district, where he outlined the grand plans he had drawn up (Mda, 2000:143-144).

One of Sir George Grey's "grand plans" turns out to be the disempowerment of chiefs who are no longer allowed to judge legal cases and impose fines on those who are found guilty. Only the British magistrates can do so. Mda notes that, "This was because the governor valued the chiefs so much that he did not want them to be burdened with such mundane matters as presiding over cases" (Mda, 2000:154). This is dehumanization of African chiefs and a severe weakening of the chieftainship as argued by Twin-Twin:

"Now, if we are going to have this white man judging our cases, whose law is he going to apply?"
"The law we apply every day," answered Nxito. "Our law."

“The white man does not understand our law,” said Twin-Twin vehemently. “He does not respect our law. He will apply the law of the English people. This is a way of introducing his laws among our people” (Mda, 2000:154).

This *status quo* has not changed to date. European laws continue to take precedence over African laws to the detriment and degradation of Africans and their inherent traditions. Chiefs and their headmen are not allowed to try major cases which under normal circumstances require basic cultural and traditional expertise for any presiding officer to do justice to. This shows how the African indigenous system has been eroded for long. One would have expected the restoration of the powers of chiefs after 1994. However this has not been so. Praise and respect of chiefs by the ANC-led government is mere lip-service. Sir George Grey himself admits that, “It will gradually undermine and destroy Xhosa laws and customs,” he said. “European laws will, by imperceptible degrees, take the place of their own barbarous customs...” (Mda, 2000:154). Later when Nongqawuse’s prophecy does not materialize and people are starving to death, Sir George Grey and his magistrates get together to review the impact that the policies they are introducing have on the Black people as the governor tells them:

“The advance of Christian civilization will sweep away ancient races. Antique laws and customs will moulder into oblivion ... The ruder languages shall disappear, and the tongue of England alone shall be heard all around. So you see, my friends, this cattle-killing nonsense augurs the dawn of a new era” (Mda, 2000:237).

This claim by the English people entails that they are on a mission to uproot, deprogramme and de-culturise all Black nationalities using Christianity as their tool. It is their myth to hold their culture and language supreme and deem all other languages coarse, discourteous and only fit to be eradicated.

In *The Madonna of Excelsior* episodes of racism are also widespread. At a church in town where Niki sometimes goes, she attends the service from outside the gate since she is not allowed to get in and brush shoulders with her “betters” owing to her colour. It is, however, ironic that Niki is “part” of the service as she joins them in all practical activities such as singing, bowing, sitting, and standing and she is actually inspired. In her imagination she even “partakes” in their Holy Communion. When the congregation throngs out of the church she attests to her oppressors that she

actually enjoyed the service. Niki fails to perceive the awkwardness and incongruity of this racial discrimination, a practice which inspired Black people to engage in the liberation myth. The church has an inscription on a marble stone:

As a Calvinist people we Afrikaners have, in accordance with our faith in the Word of God, developed a policy condemning all equality and mongrelisation between White and Black. God's Word teaches us, after all, that He willed into being separate nations, colours and languages (Mda, 2002:29-30).

The inscription further inculcates the myth that racism is God-given when it is not so. The Afrikaners were erroneously using the Bible to justify their wrongdoing. This was a way to indoctrinate Black people that anything that comes from God cannot be questioned. However, they were wrong, hence the drive by the Blacks to attain their liberation.

Cornelia's custom of weighing the workers at the butchery twice a day to ensure they are not stealing any meat is both degrading and a violation of human rights. One of the attributes associated with Blacks is pilfering. This is reminiscent of Oswald Mtshali's poem titled *Always a Suspect*, whose last stanza reads:

I trudge the city pavements
side by side with 'madam'
who shifts her handbag
from my side to the other,
and looks at me with eyes that say
'Ha! Ha! I know who you are;
beneath those fine clothes
ticks the heart of a thief' (*Sounds of a Cowhide Drum*).

On the afternoon Niki weighs a kilogramme more than she was in the morning she is immediately suspected of stealing meat and hiding it on her person. In spite of her protests, she is told to strip naked in front of everybody in the butchery. This is certainly extremely humiliating to her:

She stood in her white petticoat and protested once more that
she was not hiding any meat on her person. Then she peeled off the
petticoat and stood in her pink knickers and fawn bra.
"Raise your arms," ordered Madam Cornelia.
She did.
No chunks of meat rained from her unshaved armpits.

“Take them off, Niki,” insisted Madam Cornelia. “Everything! You must be hiding it in your knickers.”

No meat hiding in her bra. Only stained cotton-wool hiding in her knickers.

She stood there like the day she was born. Except that when she was born, there was no shame in her. No hurt. No embarrassment (Mda, 2002:41).

This is an ordeal for Niki and every other black person who sees her going through this mortifying experience. However, she is subjected to this discomfiture owing to her “sin” of being black. Nonetheless, this event leads to her resolve to revenge herself by contravening the notorious Immorality Act with Stephanus Cronje, Cornelia’s husband. Unfortunately, this happens to her own moral detriment.

Even after the unbanning of political organizations and the release of political prisoners, Viliki has not come home yet because as Popi explains to Niki:

“He did explain, Niki, that now there is even more work to be done. The Boers are still the rulers. Even though his Movement has been unbanned, here in Excelsior we still only enter the hotel as cleaners. At the post office there are still two queues – one for whites and the other for blacks” (Mda, 2002:141).

4.4 En Route to Liberation

4.4.1 Roles played by the prophets in the struggle for liberation

Prophet Mlanjeni, also known as The River Man, has as his first responsibility to preach against witchcraft and *ubuthi* (poisonous charms). His interpretation is that people should stop practising these evil practices because God has allowed the white men to come and punish them because of that. As Mda reports, “Mlanjeni ordered that all dun and yellow cattle be slaughtered, for they were an abomination. He doctored the military men for war so that the guns of the British would shoot hot water instead of bullets” (Mda, 2000:19). Although at this stage the amaXhosa do not embark on the cattle killing spree, they believe in Mlanjeni’s myth and continue to fight the colonialists even if the latter’s guns do not shoot hot water. They resort to guerrilla warfare and take refuge in the Amathole Mountains. As has already been stated, myth can influence people to perform beyond their limitations. Although the

amaXhosa were ill-equipped in terms of weaponry, they gave the British soldiers such a tough time that Mlanjeni's war dragged on for three long years as Mda describes the situation:

In the meantime, the Great White Chief was getting ever more desperate. He was unable to win the war outright. The British firepower was stronger, but the guerrilla tactics of the amaXhosa soldiers were creating havoc. General Maqona and the Khoikhoi chief, Hans Brander, were giving the Imperial armies a hard time. Mutinies became the order of the day. Queen Victoria's men refused to go to the Amathole Mountains to be slaughtered like cattle by the savage amaXhosa (Mda, 2000:22).

Owing to his failure to win the war, Sir Harry Smith was recalled to Britain, an embarrassment to him. This might be seen as a temporary victory for the amaXhosa, and a manifestation of their myth for independence from the British. However, with the arrival of Sir George Cathcart, Smith's successor, the war takes a different turn as narrated by Mda (2000:25):

If he (Cathcart) could not defeat the amaXhosa in the field of battle, he was going to starve them into submission. He ordered his soldiers to go on a rampage and burn amaXhosa fields and kill amaXhosa cattle wherever they came across them, instead of spending their time hunting down guerrillas in the crevices of the Amathole Mountains. When the troops found unarmed women working in the fields, they killed them too.

Cathcart's machination brought about the demise of the amaXhosa resulting in their failure to be freed from the British colonialists, which the liberation myth had promised. The amaXhosa would continue to live as British subjects and slaves in the land of their ancestors until another paranormal intervention.

Mlanjeni was succeeded by the prophetesses Nongqawuse, Nombanda and Nonkosi with their the cattle-killing prophecies. Since the amaXhosa have lost the battle in an open warfare they think they can defeat the whites by using mythical methods. In fact, Peires (1986:445) asserts that

The experience of defeat, the memory of thousands of brave young men wiped out by superior military technology, and the sight of the collaborators enjoying the fruits of their ancestral lands overwhelmed the Xhosa with depression and a sense of great loss. They clung ever

tighter to the reassuring and comforting beliefs of the old cosmology, while at the same time casting about for some new but complementary element of belief which would make the universe logical once again, and provide the Xhosa with a God who was the equal of the God of their colonial enemies. At the same time, rumours of British defeat in the Crimean War greatly excited Xhosa hopes of some external intervention which might free them from the British yoke. It was in this context that a number of prophets appeared in various parts of British Kaffraria, and announced that if the people killed their cattle and destroyed their corn, the dead would rise and the 'Russians' would drive the whites into the sea.

After Mlanjeni, Nongqawuse, Nombanda, and Nonkosi became the most influential prophetesses whose portend nearly annihilated the amaXhosa nation with their cattle killing messages followed by the drought. Mda (2000:60) states the prophetesses message as follows:

The existing cattle are rotten and unclean. They must all be destroyed. The new people who will arise from the dead will come with new cattle, horses, goats, sheep, dogs, fowl and any other animals that the people may want. But the new animals of the new people cannot mix with your polluted ones. So destroy them. Destroy the corn in your fields and in your granaries. Nongqawuse has told us that when the new people come there will be a new world of contentment and no one will ever lead a troubled life again (Mda, 2000:60).

As Cloete and Madadzhe (2007:67) maintain, the aim of the prophecy "was to infuse a sense of rebellion and militancy amongst the amaXhosa against any form of injustice such as racism, oppression, and slavery". The majority of the amaXhosa, including the highly respected King Sarhili who is recognised as the king of all the clans of the amaXhosa, believed in Nongqawuse's prophecies which they regarded as their only hope of emancipation from the cruel dealings of the British government. King Sarhili has a problem in parting with his great wealth, owing to the enormous value Africans put on cattle. Woodward (2003:297) states that, "Cattle were, of course, of material significance as signifiers of wealth, for milk and hides, but less so for meat. In addition, they were also valued as fitting subjects for cultural endeavours." Joyce (2009:139) affirms that, "Historically, cattle were the great common denominator, the element that spoke of wealth and of social status, even venerated in ritual." Peires (1981:8) in addition testifies that cattle did not simply serve as a store of wealth and a means of exchange, "But only cattle were

exchangeable against women. Thus they represented not only the accumulated product of past labour, they also served as the key to all future production and reproduction.” Peires (1981:38) further explains the relationship that existed between politics and economics by asserting that:

Because cattle were the primary means of reproduction in a pastoral society, he who controlled the cattle also controlled the men who depended on them. In this simple fact was rooted the unity of politics and economics which is the most striking feature of pre-colonial society. “Love your cattle,” said Hintsa to his son, Sarhili. “My people love me because I love my cattle, therefore you must love your cattle as I have done. If you have cattle, poor men will not pass by your place. No, he will stop with you.”

This perhaps explains why King Sarhili is reluctant to part with his cattle since their erosion symbolizes the decline of his chieftaincy as well. However, once Nongqawuse serves King Sarhili with beer from the ancestors, and from fresh corn, he stops doubting and gives instructions that all the amaXhosa must kill their cattle. Eventually he kills his favourite and prized bull, and “people knew that there was no turning back. The cattle had to be killed” (Mda, 2000:89). This is followed by the king’s order that people should follow Mhlakaza’s instructions. This giant leap by the king himself is sufficient to set the Believers in a frenzy as they relentlessly start killing their cattle. Peires (1989:124) is convinced that “the lungsickness epidemic was a necessary cause of the Xhosa cattle-killing. Without it, the movement could never have occurred.” However, to be safe he also adds, “But lungsickness alone was not enough to drive people into the movement ... political commitments played their part” (1986:460). Meanwhile, the multitudes that are gathering at Mhlakaza’s compound, “felt the earth shake and heard bulls bellowing beneath the ground. They were the pedigree bulls waiting to replace those that were to be killed” (Mda, 2000:90). These cattle do not only bellow beneath the ground, but in the early hours of the morning they are seen in the bushes and in the sea where the new people are also spotted. For instance, one morning, Twin “saw the risen heroes emerge from the sea. Some were on foot, others were on horseback, passing in a glorious but silent parade, then sinking again among the waves” (Mda, 2000:98). Once people are convinced about a myth they as well envision and perceive things beyond any qualm.

Although King Sarhili gives stern orders for the killing of the cattle, not all the amaXhosa carry out this instruction as they do not believe in the myth. This results in a division of the amaXhosa into two divergent groups, the Believers or *amaHomba* and the Unbelievers or *amaGogotya* who literally abhor each other as made explicit by the following passage:

Believing brothers fought against unbelieving brothers. Unbelieving spouses turned against believing spouses. Unbelieving fathers kicked believing sons out of their homesteads. Unbelieving sons plotted the demise of believing fathers. Unbelieving fathers attempted to kill believing sons. Siblings stared at each other with eyes full of blood. Many amaXhosa killed their cattle in order to facilitate the resurrection. Many others killed them unwillingly under the threat of their believing relatives (Mda, 2000:97-98).

When Nongqawuse announces that the new people maintain that as long as there are some amaXhosa among them who refuse to kill their cattle, the dead will not rise, the Believers decide to “Kill the *amaGogotya*! Destroy their crops! Kill their cattle! Burn their houses!” (Mda, 2000:123). As blood is symbolic of life, it is, therefore, imperative that everybody must participate in the liberation struggle by shedding blood. In addition, blood has a cleansing role. Therefore, if the Unbelievers decide not to kill their cattle, the land will remain unclean, and as a result the new people with the new cattle will not come. Twin’s belief in the myth is so deep-rooted that he even leads a secret force against his blood brother Twin-Twin to destroy his property. When the government routs out the Believers, the reader is told, “This sent most of the movement underground and made Twin and his followers even more determined to wage a guerrilla war against the Unbelievers and their colonial masters” (Mda 2000:127). The fact that the guerrillas indulge in subversive machinations is indicative of their resolve to see their liberation myth fulfilled even if it means some are being massacred on the way. They subsequently destroy the Unbelievers’ fields by fire or drive cattle into them and stab their prize bulls with spears. The Believers’ aim is to render the Unbelievers inept as they are left with no means of livelihood. The liberation myth gains momentum when more prophets preaching the same message surface, making prominent leaders such as Chief Maqoma openly order their subjects to heed the liberation leaders.

Just before the prophets announce the date of the resurgence of the dead, the Believers' disposition of pensiveness thrills with anticipation of the new people who are bringing with them new crops and new animals. The reader is told of Twin and Qukezwa who "wandered on their uncultivated fields or on the sands of the sea, daydreaming of the wonderful life that awaited them [and] sang the praises of Mhlakaza, Nongqawuse and Nombanda, [with] hearts [overflowing] with love and goodwill" (Mda, 2000:148). The Believers are already living in a nirvana of their own making. This blithe mood is accentuated by the women's facial adornments of red and yellow ochre because, according to the liberation myth, the Believers "knew that as soon as the ancestors arrived from the Otherworld, their youth would be restored" (Mda, 2000:148). So they would not only be liberated from political subjugation, but their bodies would be renewed as well. This might be symbolic of the new faces, new hopes and new confidence. The Believers' belief in the liberation myth is so robust that even after the first fiasco of the prophecy, when Mhlakaza reassures them of the resurrection that is still to come on the following full moon, they are incredulously joyful and filled with new hope as evinced by their sleepless singing while waiting for the prophesy. Mda recounts:

They joined the revellers at the banks of the Gxarha River, and filled the valleys of Qolorha with song and laughter. The hills echoed the joyous sounds, and sent down the spines of the colonists... Soon the night was a memory. Everyone was tired. But no one slept. They wanted to see with their own eyes the wonders and dangers (Mda, 2000:149-150).

When the prophecy fails for the second time one is tempted to think that the Believers might abandon their belief. On the contrary, a few days later the Believers are inspired by new reports that the new people, "had been seen taking a stroll in the countryside near the mouths of the great rivers" (Mda, 2000:151). This is an attestation of the Believers' hope against hope for emancipation from the fetters of the colonizers. It is soon discovered that the cause of the failure of the prophecy was due to the people who sold their cattle instead of killing them, as well as those who killed them without "going through the ritual of preserving their *imiphefumlo*, their souls" (Mda, 2000:151). There can be no liberation if people do not speak with one voice or see things in the same way. Rules have to be followed if liberation is to be achieved. Subsequently, King Sarhili takes the decision of issuing

new orders that the cattle killing should continue. This time he pushed it relentlessly. He was like a man possessed. He rode once more from his Great Place at Hohita to Qolorha, where he conferred with the prophets ... He rode further than the Gxarha River, all the way to the mouth of the Kei River (Mda, 2000:151).

King Sarhili's embarkment on this expedition once more demonstrates the significance of this liberation myth. He perceives it as his sole responsibility to travel all the way from his palace to ascertain his subjects of the firm stance he has taken about the slaughter of cattle for the manifestation of the myth. Peires' (1989:87) rationale is that Sarhili undertook the journey because he was, "Saddened by the loss of his sons, guilt-ridden over the death of Bomela, helpless in the face of the lungsickness which was decimating his cattle, his imagination fired by the stories he had heard of the wonders at the Gxarha and also, perhaps, by the images in the large pictorial Bible." I find the last two reasons racist because they imply that black people's imaginations, like those of children, get easily excited. Nonetheless, Sarhili is obviously too obsessed with the liberation myth that he does not want to see it fail for the third time in succession. Owing to the passionate obsession he has about the prophecy his mind is soon overwhelmed with the presence of the people from the Other World:

And there he saw his father, the great King Hintsa who had been beheaded by the British twenty-one years before. He was among a host of new people who appeared in boats at the mouth of the river. They told the king that they had come to liberate the black nations, and that this message must be passed throughout the world. In the meantime the cattle-killing movement must be strengthened (Mda, 2000:151-152).

King Sarhili's crazed mind reminds the reader of Macbeth's haunted mental state just before he ruthlessly murders King Duncan:

Is this a dagger which I see before me?
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee –
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still!
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
To feeling as to sight? Or art thou but
A dagger of the mind, a false creation,
Proceeding from the heart-oppressed brain?
I see thee yet, in form as palpable
As this which now I draw ... There's no such thing.

It is the bloody business which informs
Thus to mine eyes (*Macbeth* 1.ii.33-49).

Morris (2004:101) maintains that Sarhili “saw a return to Xhosa beliefs as a way of resisting the colonial advance and he was among those who claimed he himself had seen visions that corroborated the prophecy. His support for the killing of cattle and the destruction of crops convinced many.” It is apparent that all this was a dream and hope to preserve his independence. Notwithstanding the Second Disappointment, the Believers continue to sit on the banks of the Gxarha River near its estuary, still “hoping the sun would turn red, and other suns would emerge behind the mountains or from the horizon and run amok across the sky and collide and explode and their embers rain on the earth and burn the hardened souls of the Unbelievers” (Mda, 2000:176). They continue to put their hope on the liberation myth, against all odds. When the *HMS Geyser*, full of soldiers, is seen entering the Kei River but soon sails back without attacking anybody, the Believers regard this as victory against The Man Who Named Ten Rivers. This sudden conquest sets off a new wave of cattle killing, as Mda states:

It was a sure sign that the new people were powerful, and were about to show themselves according to the prophecies of Nongqawuse. The faith of those people who were beginning to waver was reinforced. A number of Unbelievers became Believers. Even those Believers who had long finished killing their cattle, and were beginning to get hungry, gained more courage (Mda, 2000:179).

The Believers’ dream for imminent emancipation is once more refreshed by the unexpected emergence of the eleven-year-old Nonkosi at the banks of the Mpongo River. Although her message is similar to that of Nongqawuse, she discourages her followers from wearing ornaments and make-up. Instead she tells them to shave their eyebrows, and “in the evenings they [participate] in the ukurhuda rituals where the wonderful prophetess [administers] sacred enemas and emetics on her followers. They [vomit] and their stomachs [run] all night long” (Mda, 2000:183). The value attached to these ceremonies signals the Believers’ conviction in the liberation myth. This same value influences down-to-earth Believers such as Twin and his wife Qukezwa to refuse to cultivate their fields and sit all day long on a hill where “they would wait until the new people came riding on the waves” (Mda, 2000:211-212),

while watching for the approach of the long promised Russian ships to come and destroy the colonists. Others, as Mda maintains:

Prepared for the new people by sewing new milk sacks, renovating their houses and making new doors for them, and rebuilding their kraals. Even those widows who had remarried left their current husbands and returned to their old homesteads to await the resurrection of their first loves (Mda, 2000:242).

One remarkable thing about the Believers is that even after the Great Disappointment of 16 February 1857, they do not point fingers at the prophets, but they impugn the amaGogotya, the Unbelievers “who had refused to slaughter their cattle and continued to cultivate their lands” (Mda, 2000:243). It is, therefore, the Believers’ conviction that the liberation myth fails because the nation is not united.

In *The Madonna of Excelsior*, there is an underground organisation fighting the regime for political liberation. Suttner (2008:34) asserts that although some of the underground activities are to find and provide aid to relatives of detainees, organise legal defence and pay fines for those charged, “the covert structures facilitated recruitment to MK, including exit from and entry into the country for MK soldiers”. The organisation recruits young men and women to cross the borders of South Africa to neighbouring states where they receive military training as elucidated:

He (Viliki) had this tendency to disappear for days on end. And no one knew where he was... He had joined the guerrilla forces, those who were fighting to liberate South Africa from the oppression of the Boers. He was working for the underground political Movement ... The underground he was talking about ... was in Lesotho. He crossed the Caledon River every week to smuggle out young men and women who were going to join the forces of liberation. Young men and women who came from all over South Africa, and were directed to his conduit by cell leaders. He took them across the river where he introduced them to his contact in Maseru – the only guerrilla leader he met. From there some of them would be smuggled out of the country for military training, after which they would be infiltrated back to cause havoc to the enemy (Mda, 2000:125).

Secrecy, as Viliki demonstrates, is one of the requirements expected of underground cadres. Although Viliki knows that he has his mother, Niki, and sister, Popi, who are his next of kin and who should know about his movements and whereabouts, this cannot be done for the safety of himself and his cadres. It is apparent that these risks

are taken for the manifestation of the liberation myth. Suttner (2008:85) quotes John Nkalimeng, who used to give the following advice to the MK cadres infiltrating South Africa:

“You know who is your enemy now? For you to succeed in your ... [operation] it is your mother [who is the danger]. Never go to your mother. If you do go to your mother you are finished. Because your mother will be so excited she is going to tell her cousin, her friend, and then it will be known that you are here and the enemy is sitting there and waiting for this type of information. So you can’t succeed. Your mother, your sister, your girlfriend, your good friend, not one of them.”

Viliki’s involvement in the struggle as an underground cadre has serious risk in it. For him to undertake this activity means he understands what he is doing and is committed to the myth of liberation. Viliki himself has to sacrifice his education as he abandons school before completing matric. His surreptitious nocturnal movements between South Africa and Lesotho have no guarantee of personal safety since he is regarded as the enemy of the regime. Some of the youth whom he has smuggled out of the country are unknown to him and can even betray him to the enemy which might lead to his being arrested by the security police. If he is arrested he will be brutally tortured, or be detained without trial or even be killed. The same hazards also apply to the young men and women who are smuggled out of the country. However, there is one thing that is central to all of them, the unflinching belief in the myth of liberating their country. Suttner (2008:84) makes the following observation about the character of underground work:

Underground work is a form of political activism requiring certain tools necessary to safeguard secrecy as well as calling for a personal commitment that will sustain people through adverse conditions. Most people who entered underground units knew they faced great dangers. They only needed a sprinkling of knowledge of resistance history to appreciate that, from the earliest days after the ANC’s banning and especially after the introduction of detention without trial, people were routinely tortured and sometimes killed.

Viliki has to sacrifice even the leisure of being with his family as we see Popi raising her concern for him at their mother’s birthday party, “And we won’t be leaving her alone for weeks on end,” she added, “not so, Viliki? You vow you’ll stop gallivanting all over the place?” (Mda, 2002:133). Popi interprets Viliki’s movements as simply idling, just as she equates the liberation struggle to a kind of folklore that lacks a

happy ending. However, the essence of Popi's message is that she misses her brother whose answer reveals his commitment and determination as he states, "You know I can't make such a vow, Popi," pleaded Viliki. "You know exactly why I can't do such a thing" (Mda 2002:133). This is a sacrifice intended to see the consummation of the liberation struggle. It is ironical that just when they are celebrating their mother's birthday, Sekatle takes the opportunity to betray Viliki to the security police. The latter put him in detention where they deal with him severely. Mda informs us that

He was in detention where the Special Branch policemen were torturing him, demanding a confession. He insisted he had none to make. He would rather die than betray his comrades. The more the electric current ran through his body and his genitals were clamped with a pair of pliers, the more hatred for Sekatle swelled in his body (Mda, 2002:137).

The extract shows Viliki being subjected to bestial forms of torture to force him to betray his organization to the enemy, but he stalwartly does not give in. This is reminiscent of the legendary but notorious Robben Island and other detention camps where many South African freedom fighters were incarcerated and subjected to all forms of corporal and psychological torture to give up their goals or sell out their colleagues, but refused to do so.

4.4.2 The role of the youth in the liberation myth

In *Ways of Dying* the Young Tigers, among them children as young as five years, are naively involved in the liberation struggle. Liberation occupies the people's minds and the struggle affects everybody. Therefore, children have a part in it in spite of their innocence. They are innocent because they least understand what they are doing or the implications of their actions. For instance, in portraying Vutha, Mda informs the reader:

At the age of five, Vutha was already a veteran of many political demonstrations. He was an expert at dancing the freedom dance, and at chanting the names of the leaders who must be revered, and of the sell-outs who must be destroyed. He could recite the Liberation Code and the Declaration of the People's Rights ... He also knew all the songs [and] could be heard singing about freedom, and about the

heroic deeds of the armed wing of the people's movement (Mda, 1995:179).

During demonstrations, Vutha and his colleagues are in the vanguard of stone throwers and as Mda puts it, "Vutha and his comrades would throw stones at the armoured vehicles" (Mda, 1995:181). Unfortunately, the soldiers do not read any innocence in the children's actions, hence they react with live ammunition as the reader is told, "The soldiers, challenged by the full might of deadly five-year-olds armed with arsenals of stones, would open fire. In many cases, children died in these clashes" (Mda, 1995:180-181). Vutha is so daring that he won't listen to his mother's dissuasive attempts:

"But mama, I am a cadre. I am a freedom fighter."

"It is a good thing to be a cadre, my child. But when the soldiers come, you must not be in the front. Let the older boys, the Young Tigers, be in the frontline."

"I am not a coward, mama. I am a Young Tiger too" (Mda, 1995:181).

Vutha is in fact very proud of the praises accorded him. They make him feel a "hero", particularly when he is told, "if a stone from his hand hit a policeman, or a soldier, or a hostel vigilante on the head, he would surely fall down" (Mda, 1995:181). These children are also subjected to "political education" (Mda, 1995:181) in which they are taught about the "nature of oppression" (Mda, 1995:181), something far above their comprehension. As a result they are unable to understand the implications of their betrayal when they speak of the plans of the Young Tigers to the hostel dwellers. Nonetheless, when they are found out by the Young Tigers, their innocence is discounted as they are horrendously necklaced. Vutha's tyre is lit by Danisa, his close playmate, who innocently goes to Noria to tell her, "Auntie Noria, I burnt The Second because he is a sell-out" (Mda, 1995:190). In this instance, the intended objective ironically turns out to be poignantly destructive.

4.4.3 The role of women in the South African liberation myth

Women, as usual, will constantly be part and parcel of any struggle for liberation. *The Heart of Redness* describes how during the war of Mlanjeni, the Khoikhoi join forces with the amaXhosa against the colonists. The Khoikhoi women played an exceptional role during this period by prostituting themselves to the British soldiers

“in order to smuggle canisters of gunpowder to their fighting men” (Mda, 2000:22). This is an unusual contribution to the struggle as these women have to sacrifice their bodies and reputation for regularly supplying ammunition to the fighting guerrillas in the mountains. The contribution of women to fulfil the liberation struggle is also reflected in the portrayal of Twin’s wife, Qukezwa, who at every crossroad where there is a cairn, invokes Tsiqwa, the Khoikhoi god’s powers, to help them win the war.

The liberation myth also induces women to act bizarrely as Mda states what happens during the cattle-killing period. Although the women are the main cultivators of land

Many of them refused to go to the fields even when their husbands were the staunchest of Unbelievers. Women became the strongest supporters of the prophets. Many of them left their husbands and went to live with their parents. Women were the leaders of the cattle-killing movement (Mda, 2000:126).

In the above extract, women, who are of course expected to obey their husbands at all times, decide to violate this order of doing things for the liberation myth to come to pass. Not only do they disobey their husbands, but they give up their marriages as well. They even take over the duty of slaughtering cattle, a task traditionally accomplished by men, not women. So in essence, both men and women are involved in the implementation of the prophets’ instructions. On the day when the *HSS Geyser* approaches the Kei River estuary and there is a clarion call for men to prepare themselves for war, the women also draw together to support their men as shown in the following conversation between Twin and Qukezwa:

“Why did you come?” Asked Twin impatiently. “You are supposed to be looking after Heitsi at Mhlakaza’s, and not running around the war front.”

“We had to come, Father of Heitsi,” said Qukezwa sweetly. “We cannot let you fight a war alone.”

“I am not fighting a war alone! I am with the other soldiers.”

“Women must do their bit as well. That is why I rallied them from the village to come and ululate their men to victory” (Mda, 2000:178-179).

Although these women do not have any weapons in their hands, they realise that their presence is indispensable. They have to be there to urge on their husbands and render any other service that might help conquer the enemy.

NoGiant, MamCirha and NoPetticoat are three women to be considered in terms of their economic freedom. Traditionally, in a patriarchal society it is the contractual obligation of the man to work and support his family. Nonetheless, NoGiant and MamCirha have overturned this custom by harvesting the mussels and oysters, i.e. *imbhaza* and *imbhatyisa* respectively. These women are economically independent of male support. When Camagu joins them to form a co-operative society, they expand their activities by producing “traditional isiXhosa costumes and accessories such as beaded pipes and shoulder bags” (Mda, 2000:185), to be marketed in Johannesburg. NoPetticoat first shows her interest in joining the co-operative society when they are at Camagu’s house-warming party. It is ironic that the learned Xoliswa, unlike her intellectual equal Camagu, fails to see that civilisation has nothing to do with one’s culture or tradition. Civilisation does not mean forsaking one’s culture and espousing other people’s cultures. Xoliswa does sometimes contradict herself because earlier in the story she buys her parents European clothes to wean them from their “redness”, but when they sometimes walk together holding hands, she is embarrassed by the act. According to her, “old people have no right to love. And if they happen to be foolish enough to harbour the slightest affection for each other, they must not display it in public” (Mda, 2000:2). However, regardless of Xoliswa’s hypothesis, NoPetticoat defies her husband and daughter and joins the corporate world to liberate herself from the ridiculous oppressive “civilization”, as Mda maintains:

They were an utter punishment for her. She loves the clothes of the *amahomba*. She has always loved them. She will always love them. As for puffing on her long pipe, she is no longer prepared to suffer from *ukunqanqatheka* – the searing desire for tobacco – just to make her daughter happy. She has grabbed for herself the freedom to enjoy her pungent tobacco (Mda, 2000:300-301).

It is, however, ironical that when NoPetticoat boasts of attaining her freedom by joining the co-operative society, she is no longer at peace with her husband Bhonco who is adamant that, “He will not talk with her until she stops gallivanting with believers or their sympathisers” (Mda, 2000:300). One of the sympathisers referred to is Camagu who has recently become Zim’s son-in-law, although the latter refuses to be dragged into the ludicrous wars between the Believers and Unbelievers.

Later in the story when NoGiant's husband burns down their house, it is because she refuses him his conjugal rights before he takes a bath, an attitude that is not common among traditional African women as Mda points out:

Since when have conditions ever been set before he could enjoy the pleasures of marriage? Where was the bath when he paid his father's cattle for her? What gives her, a mere woman, the right to pass judgement on the state of his cleanliness or lack thereof (Mda, 2000:253).

NoGiant's stance against her husband is an indication that unlike in the past, women will not condescend to be oppressed in silence. The co-operative society later becomes a tourist place which starts "as a backpacker's hostel but has now developed into a holiday camp" (Mda, 2000:314) owned by the villagers who have joined. It grows to an extent that it even competes with the Blue Flamingo Hotel, rendering the women financially emancipated. Vatiswa, a former employee at the Blue Flamingo, now manages the holiday camp. This is a step ahead because in the past women were not trusted with managerial positions.

Xoliswa Ximiya is one of the female protagonists and her role in the story is therefore vital. She is the daughter of Bhonco and NoPetticoat. When the novel opens she has just been appointed as the principal of Qolorha-by-Sea Secondary School. Xoliswa is highly respected in the community because she is, "not just Xoliswa. People use both her name and surname when they talk about her, because she is an important person in the community. A celebrity, so to speak" (Mda, 2000:2-3). Xoliswa, unlike other female characters in the novel, is highly educated. This is an important undertaking which liberates women from the shackles of illiteracy because in the past there was a myth that if an African female child attended school it would make her "mad". By "mad" the parents meant that the girl child would become wild, immoral and grow without respect. This is evinced by NoPetticoat's protest against Xoliswa's desire to leave home for Pretoria, "You see, Bhonco, you should never have allowed this child to take that scholarship to America" (Mda, 2000:11). When Bhonco is attacked by bees and he pronounces that it is the ancestors, Xoliswa denies it, and Bhonco reasons, "Education has made this girl mad" (Mda, 2000:262). Therefore, preference to attend school was given to male children. As Mda informs the reader, "She is highly learned too, with a BA in education from the University of Fort Hare,

and a certificate in teaching English as a second language from some college in America” (Mda, 2000:3). Unlike in Mahfouz’s *The Cairo Trilogy* in which there is reluctance to send female children to school, Ngugi and Mda’s female children have no impediments. In *Weep Not, Child* Njeri, Jacobo’s daughter, attends school together with Njoroge. The fact that Xoliswa Ximiya is such a highly educated woman is an indication that her parents and the society at large attach value to education.

Owing to Xoliswa’s immersion in Western education and ways, she has almost acculturated herself and has become a stranger in her own society and holds the myth that her own culture is backward. For instance, when Camagu tells her about the memory ritual of the Unbelievers, Mda tells us, “She is surprised that such a highly educated man who has lived in America for three decades is fascinated by such rubbish” (Mda, 2000:99). In response to Camagu’s fascination she tells him, “It is embarrassing, really ... I do not know why they do not want to forget our shameful past” (Mda, 2000:99), and continues to tell him “about her wish to leave Qolorha-by-Sea, to be away from the uncivilized bush and the hicks who want to preserve an outdated culture” (Mda, 2000:99-100). Xoliswa is forced to break off her friendship with Camagu because of his belief in the *Majola*, the brown mole snake which is the totem of his people, the amaMpondomise clan. She finds the history of Nongqawuse and her prophecies which nearly annihilated the amaXhosa a huge embarrassment. The mere mention of Nongqawuse’s name, “makes her cringe in embarrassment. That episode of the story of her people is a shame and a disgrace” (Mda, 2000:110). When her own people perform some of the old amaXhosa activities before the tourists at the Blue Flamingo Hotel, Mda informs us, “Xoliswa Ximiya is not happy that her people are made to act like buffoons for these white tourists. She is miffed that the trails glorify primitive practices. Her people are like monkeys in a zoo, observed with amusement by white foreigners” (Mda, 2000:184).

Xoliswa Ximiya is strongly opposed to anything with the red colour which runs like a thread throughout the novel. The amaXhosa have for many generations been referred to as the red blanket people. Monetise (2010:2) mentions that “Red and the orange of ochre were the traditional colours of the Xhosa, Tembu and Bomvana (the red ones).” The red colour is, therefore, the amaXhosa identity. NoPetticoat, for instance, “is one of the amahomba – those who look beautiful and pride themselves

in fashion. She is wearing her red-ochred isikhakha dress” (Mda 2000:47). The day Qukezwa is summoned to the chief’s kraal to be tried for cutting down trees, the elders grunt and mumble, “Shouldn’t she be focusing her interest on red ochre and other matters of good grooming and beauty?” Mda (2000:249). Nonetheless, enlightened or civilised people like Xoliswa Ximiya who strongly support modernity and the development of Xolorho-by-Sea, associate the red colour in the story with backwardness or darkness. For instance, when the Believers counter the idea of building a casino city in Qolorha-by-Sea, the Unbelievers, who are in favour of development and civilization argue, “They want us to remain in our wildness!” says an elder. “To remain red all our lives! To stay in the darkness of redness (Mda 2000:79). Bhonco too, though illiterate, is an Unbeliever who supports civilization, he has taken a decision to wean himself from backwardness by wearing suits and

is in the process of persuading his wife also to do away with the red ochre that women smear on their bodies and with which they also dye their isikhakha skirts. When the villagers talk of the redness of unenlightenment they are referring to the red ochre. But even the isikhakha skirt itself represents backwardness. NoPetticoat must do away with this isiXhosa prided costume (Mda, 2000:79).

At Camagu’s house-warming party Xoliswa, in spite of the fact that she is a guest and she is supposed to be polite, continues to show her scorn for the culture of her people:

“I say it is an insult to the people of Qolorha-by-Sea,” Xoliswa Ximiya screeches. “My people are trying to move away from redness, but you are doing your damndest to drag them back.”

“To you, Xoliswa, the isikhakha skirt represents backwardness,” says Camagu defensively. “But to other people it represents a beautiful artistic cultural heritage” (Mda, 2000:184).

NoPetticoat, who is spellbound by the amaXhosa products, shares her views with Xoliswa about joining the cooperative, and the following conversation demonstrating her disparagement ensues:

“Maybe we have judged him (Camagu) too harshly,” says NoPetticoat deliberately. “Maybe there are indeed many different paths to progress.”

“How can you say that, Mother?”

“The clothes that they make at the co-operative ... they are so beautiful. The *isikhakha* skirts. The beaded ornaments. The handbags.”

“They are the clothes of the *amaqaba*, mother – of the red people who have not yet seen the light of civilisation.”

“Oh, how I miss the beautiful isiXhosa clothes of the *amahomba*!”

Xoliswa Ximiya stares at her mother in disbelief. No Petticoat has that distant look that speaks of a deep longing for what used to be (Mda, 2000:261).

It is obvious that Xoliswa does not want her mother to join the cooperative as she thinks whatever the women are making there is taking the village into backwardness. Xoliswa thus supports the building of a casino at Qolorho-by-Sea because that is a sign of modern development and civilization and will actually help in job creation by bringing real tourists which will in turn boost the economy of the local area.

Nevertheless, Xoliswa Ximiya builds her father a four-walled tin-roofed house, “saving him from the ridicule of having only one pink rondavel at his compound” (Mda, 2000:166). Providing shelter to one’s dependants is still regarded as a man’s duty among Africans and when Xoliswa does it for her father, she demystifies this myth. Nonetheless, although this might be seen as a token to be appreciated, the Believers are displeased about it as Mda states, “The Believers, on the other hand, think it is a shame that a man who should have worked for himself to fill his compound with rondavels, hexagons, and at least one *ixande* has to depend on a girl to build him a house” (Mda, 2000:166).

However, in spite of Xoliswa’s attempt to liberate herself from the myth of her “primitive” and “backward” culture and people,

She wakes up one day and finds that the scars of history have erupted on her body. All of a sudden her ancestor’s flagellation has become her flagellation. She rebels against these heathen scars. She refuses to believe that they are part of an ancestral vengeance. She curses her father for resuscitating the Cult of the Unbelievers (Mda, 2000:301).

Cloete and Madadzhe (2007:44) make the following comment concerning the scars that develop on Xoliswa Ximiya’s back:

Despite her superior education, elevated career opportunities and modern views, the appearance of the scars connects her to the mysticism of her people since they are an emblem of the connectedness through time of the people, especially in their sorrow.

Woodward (2003:178) alleges that the scars come out on Xoliswa body “for lack of belief in the prophecies ... [and] cruelly alert her not only to her denial of the force of history but also to the denial of her embodiment”. The citizens blame Xoliswa’s scars on her principalship, a myth that women, being inferior to men, cannot lead:

“What else did they expect?” ask the wagging tongues. “She is a man in a woman’s body. That is why no man can tame her. That is why even a doctor like Camagu was afraid to marry her. He knew that she was her own boss, and that she would not be controlled by any man. That is why she rules all those men and women at the secondary school with an iron stick” (Mda, 2000:302).

Cloete and Madadzhe, (2008:45-56) also support this argument when they mention: “Despite his earlier acclaim for Xoliswa Ximiya’s professional achievements, Mda once more falls back on traditional belief in myth and witchcraft to illustrate male disdain for female advancement by letting the legendary scars appear on Xoliswa Ximiya’s back”. Out of disillusionment and frustration due to unfulfilled dreams and expectations, Xoliswa leaves Qolorho-by-Sea, “which metonymically represents the heart of redness for her” (Sewlall, 2003:338), to find a cure for the scars on her back. Although physically she leaves the village, she will remain connected to it by the scars, even against her will. Cloete and Madadzhe (2007:44) support this view as they mention:

While she tries her utmost to distance herself from her roots, circumstances are such that they [the scars] will always remind her of her origin. The implication is that it is extremely difficult to truly and completely divorce oneself from one’s environment. The appearance of the scars on her body can only be traumatic to her as she associates them with the backwardness and savagery she thought she had fully put behind her by slavishly adopting Western culture as the epitome of civilization. To her consternation, as the scars boldly assert, running away from her hybridity is a futile exercise

Soon Xoliswa is appointed Deputy Director in the Department of Education in Pretoria, a sign of the remarkable move to gender equity in South Africa, though

paradoxically just where Camagu recently failed to secure a job. So, there is beginning to be a shift from the old myth of treating women as inferior objects only capable of child bearing and rearing with no work outside the home. Cloete and Madadzhe (2007:43) note that, “She thus does not adhere to archaic edicts which compel women to look up to men as the only providers.”

Qukezwa Zim is Xoliswa Ximiya’s foil because while the latter is associated with modernity, the former should be linked with everything that is traditional. Cloete and Madadzhe (2008:45-63) point out that, “In patriarchal societies, females are not expected to initiate love relationships nor do they have the liberty to choose their lovers. Even if a female were to ignore this dictum, it would be of little help as she would be regarded as an outcast. The norm is that males should take control of love affairs for all females”. However, Qukezwa violates this principle since on the first day Camagu arrives at Qolorha-by-Sea in quest of NomaRussia, she becomes astonishingly up-front. As she takes Camagu to John Dalton’s house behind the store, the following conversation ensues:

“I am not married”...
“I am available if you want me,” she adds.
“What do you mean?”
“You can lobola me if you like” (Mda, 2000:62).

Camagu finds this boldness shocking as he has not come across such behaviour before. Hence, when they later unexpectedly meet at Nongqawuse’s lagoon, Camagu reminds Qukezwa of her improper conduct:

“Oh, you are the girl at the shop. The girl who told me-“
“Told you what?”
“Come on, you know that we met at the store where you work. You actually propositioned me, naughty girl!” (Mda, 2000:100).

Qukezwa’s frankness in her relationship with Camagu sets her apart from the rest of the other female characters in the novel. She is a shrewd woman and regards herself as being above male domination as portrayed in her arguments with Camagu. For instance, despite his learning, Camagu only appreciates the Believers’ stance against the “gambling paradise” (Mda, 2000:287) after her profound account. When she is found cutting down trees in Nongqawuse’s Valley, and the chief’s messenger

decides to charge her father Zim on the ground that she is a minor and that by tradition young females do not attend such gatherings, she is adamant that she is the one to be charged as it is she, not her father who cut down the trees. During the court trial when the elders insist on charging her father she challenges them thus:

“I am twenty years old,” says Qukezwa.

“You are a minor still. Even if you were thirty or fifty you would still be a minor as long as you are not married,” explains Chief Xikixa.

“That is the old law,” cries Qukezwa, “the law that weighed heavily on our shoulders during the sufferings of the Middle Generations. In the new South Africa where there is no discrimination, it does not work” (Mda, 2000:245-246).

Qukezwa understands her democratic rights and takes advantage of the current political setup where all people are equal before the law. She also knows that unlike in the past when women could not voice their concerns, the current constitution gives her the right to speak. To make sure her point is driven home she goes on to tell the elders, “I do not mean to be rude to you, my elders ... I cut the trees, and I shall cut them again” (Mda, 2000:247). When the elders argue that the law allows “the umga and mimosa” and not the “lantana and wattle trees” (Mda, 2000:248) to be cut without permission, she snaps at them, “Then the law must be changed” (Mda, 2000:248). The cutting down of these foreign trees is symbolic of the defiance the amaXhosa were making against the colonisers. Qukezwa’s indigenous knowledge of flora and fauna is exceptional as revealed in this trial. She actually has to teach the elders that the trees that she cuts are foreign trees that come “from Central America, from Australia ... to suffocate our trees [as they] are as harmful as the inkberry” (Mda, 2000:248). The image created is that some of trees are growing fast and tall at the expense of those that grow thin and short. Symbolically the colonizers, like their foreign trees, have suffocated the black South Africans by subjecting them to forceful removals from the fertile areas and crowding them in little barren homelands and townships. Erosion of the black people’s traditions and cultures has been another form of suffocating them. Qukezwa’s profound traditional or indigenous knowledge, mostly dismissed as primitive and childlike, is ironically something that is receiving increasing attention by academia and the development institutions, therefore demystifying the myth that only western school-based knowledge can save this world. Comparing Aboriginal and Western ways of knowing, an internet article

<http://www.suite101.com/content/indigenous-knowledge-systems-a26760> describes “Holistic Knowledge” one of the eight categories of Indigenous Knowledge as follows:

Holistic Knowledge is the cornerstone of a unified Aboriginal worldview. All knowledge in this worldview is inseparable from land, place, spirit, language, kin, law, story. Natural and supernatural signs guide understandings of the relationships between all these elements, and within these synergistic links culture is created and recreated. Western reduction on the other hand breaks these into components and studies one element at a time, losing the deep knowledge of the whole in the shallow analysis of the parts.

It is, therefore, imperative to acknowledge that what cannot be comprehended in and about others should not be dismissed as barbaric or pagan. Both Western and Indigenous Knowledge Systems should exist side by side and complement each other. After all, significant contributions to global knowledge have originated from indigenous people. Another internet article, <http://www.worldbank.org/afr/ik/basic.htm> asserts that, “Indigenous knowledge is also the social capital of the poor, their main asset to invest in the struggle for survival, to produce food, to provide for shelter or to achieve control over their lives.” In essence, the poor’s livelihood depends mainly on specific skills and knowledge for their survival. For instance, since expensive modern medicines are inaccessible to them, they have to rely on indigenous knowledge that has been passed down from generation to generation. Lebakeng and Payle (2002:75) argue that, “in order to provide a better life for all and address the development needs of the country, it is imperative that serious consideration be given to indigenous knowledge systems. To continue reliance on the developed countries has left Africa with a legacy of unsustainable development and a growing sense of dependence.” Besides, Indigenous Knowledge Systems, especially amongst Africans who have been pushed off their historical and cultural customs is a way of self identity. Dhliwayo (2008:13) argues that, “Africans have for the past five hundred years, been culturally dislocated and have lived in accordance with alien European value systems and ideals.” This claim is supported by Kambon (2005:18) who maintains that Africans,

are in total denial of their Africanity. Severe CM (cultural misorientation) Africans represent the extreme racial-cultural self-haters who are overtly and extremely anti-African in their beliefs, attitudes and behaviours, and will use overt violence if necessary

against the self or other Africans in their striving to negotiate (adapt to) the condition of cultural oppression. They cling very tightly to the European worldview that they will sacrifice everything (including their physical lives) to uphold and maintain its integrity within the African community (as well as its universality, etc). They have no sense of self-definition outside the European worldview.

Throughout the narration Qukezwa, whom Sewlall (2003:338) calls “the *alter ego* of the prophetess Nongqawuse” is portrayed as a mythological figure who commits numerous mysterious actions. She rides her horse, Gxagxa, bareback, reinless and naked. She gives Camagu a mythical horse-ride at which she sings him, causing him to have an orgasm that results in Qukezwa’s inexplicable “immaculate” (Woodward, 2003:181) conception because in spite of the fact that she is pregnant, the elders maintain that she is still a virgin. When she sings her voice is sensationally out of this world as we are told:

Qukezwa sings in such beautiful colours. Soft colours like the ochre of yellow gullies. Reassuring colours of the earth. Red. Hot colours like blazing fire. Deep blue. Deep green. Colours of the valleys and the ocean. Cool colours like the rain of summer sliding down a pair of naked bodies (Mda, 2000:223).

Colours fill our world with beauty and we are delighted and charmed by the gorgeous flowering plants and the brilliantly coloured arch of a rainbow. It is striking to note that Qukezwa can sing in “red, hot colours like blazing fire”. An anonymous internet article titled, “Colour Wheel Pro” (2002:1) states that, “Red is the colour of fire and blood, so it is associated with energy, war, danger, strength, power, determination as well as passion, desire, and love.” Although the red colour in Mda’s novel, *The Heart of Redness* refers to the traditional colour of the amaXhosa, it might also symbolically refer to the disagreements and quarrels that exist between the Believers and the Unbelievers as suggested by the red colours. This is supported by Pebble (2009:1) who mentions that, “Studies have shown that when exposed to the colour red, people’s heart rates and respiration levels tend to rise. Their metabolism also increases, and many people become anxious or temperamental.” From the early generation of Twin and Twin-Twin, to the current generation of Zim and Bhonco, their behaviours are such that they seem to be under the influence of these red, hot colours which are always blazing like fire. Pebble (2009:1) adds that, “Romance is one place where red is a perfect centrepiece. This colour makes people energetic,

excited, and even inspired, and can add a spark to a fading relationship.” Camagu comes to Qolorha-by-Sea in pursuit of a fairy-tale romance of a NomaRussia, only to find himself ensnared first by Xoliswa Ximiya and then by the magical Qukezwa Zim, with whom he finally settles. The deep blue and deep green colours which Qukezwa uses in her singing are perhaps symbolic of the stability that she brings to Camagu’s life. The anonymous internet article avows that

Blue is the colour of the sky and sea. It is associated with depth and stability. It symbolizes trust, loyalty, wisdom, confidence, intelligence, faith, truth, and heaven. Blue is considered beneficial to the mind and body. It slows human metabolism and produces a calming effect. Blue is strongly associated with tranquillity and calmness. Green is the colour of nature. It symbolizes growth, harmony, freshness, and fertility. Green has strong emotional correspondence with safety. Green has great healing power. It is the most restful colour for the human eye; it can improve vision. Green suggests stability and endurance. Sometimes green denotes lack of experience. In heraldry, green indicates growth and hope.

Symbolically, too, South Africa has had a period of dissension created by apartheid structures, where human rights were being violated for no substantial reason, but owing to the liberation myth a democratically elected government has dawned, and there is hope for a better life for all. Qukezwa’s mixture of all these colours might also suggest that real life is intricate rather than simple, yet we have to create harmony and order to survive.

Besides her innate knowledge of the plant and animal species, she has an acute understanding of the weather conditions at Qolorha-by-Sea. For instance, she knows in which weather conditions the abalone, the *imbhaza* and *imbhatyisa* should be harvested. On the evening after the visit by the casino city developers, Camagu desperately asks her for another mythical horse-ride, but she softly whispers, “But there is no moon tonight” (Mda, 2000:135), meaning that the weather is not conducive to trigger the emotion he wants to go through. Consequently, in spite of his insistence and her efforts to sing him into having another orgasm, the silvery night cannot be recaptured.

From its inception, Qukezwa’s intimate relationship with Camagu is also under her control, a feature one finds uncommon. As revealed in the aforementioned extract,

she takes the responsibility of making a proposition to him on his arrival at Qolorha-by-Sea. She manipulates their encounters, not Camagu as one would expect. Camagu is under her magic spells and charms as she holds sway over him. Woodward (2003:180) states that, “it is Qukezwa who actually challenges him on levels of sexuality and who galvanises him to transform, in unconsciously, his outer conduct until it manifests an inner change which he himself is initially unaware of”. Although he is uncomfortable to be seen with her, and would like to call on NoGiant unaccompanied, she tells him, “I still want to come ... [people] must get used to seeing us together, and talk until their tongues are twisted. Unless you want to chicken out” (Mda, 2000:253).

Popi, in *The Madonna of Excelsior*, unlike Xoliswa Ximiya and Xuxezwa Zim, though a product of the controversial case of miscegenation in the Free State, devotes her life to the newly democratic changes in the history of South Africa. Popi’s active participation in politics starts one afternoon when Viliki asks her to go and cash a cheque at Volkskas Bank in Excelsior. On her way back she is brutally whipped and kicked by the police who are trying to disperse a group of people toy-toying for the release of all political prisoners. Later when Niki is washing her wounds a new perception about the evils of apartheid structures dawns unto Popi and she resolves never to stand aloof and be indifferent, as Mda reports, “She was no longer going to be a bystander. Or a side-walker who minded her own business. A side-walker who had done no wrong and would therefore not run away” (Mda, 2002:159). She becomes proactive as she starts going to every demonstration and attends rallies all over the eastern Free State and as far as QwaQwa, something atypical among women of that era. When Niki suggests that Popi should get married, she responds, “Even if I were to marry, that man would have to understand that I am dedicated to the Movement first and foremost. He would have to be a Movement man himself” (Mda, 2002:168). She would obviously not prefer a partner who would derail her aspirations or mess up with her political activities for she is intent on seeing her people liberated once and for all. She is a woman with so much energy, hence her intense involvement in the campaigns for the elections as Mda informs the reader:

She had every intention of becoming a politician. Before the general elections the previous year, she had trudged the farmlands on foot, canvassing farm workers to vote for the Movement. She had told the

farmers to go to hell when they fired their workers for being cheeky. She had staged fiery confrontations with those farm owners who had sent their workers packing” (Mda, 2002:169).

Popi’s determination to help the myth of liberation to be fulfilled has made her give all her life for others, forgetting about her personal safety. Anything can happen to her while wandering from farm to farm. Being a woman means that she is defenceless against any threat or assault, yet she hazards everything to contribute to the sovereignty of her people and country. Her hotheadedness inspires the workers to “become her ardent followers and therefore ardent followers of the Movement” (Mda, 2002:170). When she attends church gatherings with other women, she does not settle for what the gatherings are all about, but she “proceeded to recruit them to vote for the Movement” (Mda, 2002:170). Consequently, when the local elections are held she is elected as a councillor. Her involvement in political activities is remarkable when one realises that there has always existed the myth to associate politics with men. Popi’s role is to demystify ideas and perceptions, and demonstrate that women, like men, are capable of making a difference if given a platform in society. Popi, therefore, has a duty of transforming the lives of her people.

4.5. The Jim Comes to Jo’burg Myth

Very often people living in rural areas and on farms migrate to the cities and towns in the hope of securing better jobs, housing, transportation and education for their children. The fact that businesses, which create jobs, are located in urban areas makes them to be viewed as places where money and services are easily found, hence people are attracted and subsequently take their chance and move there to carve a living. However, time and again, these high expectations are met with ruthless realities of unemployment, hunger and the absence of accommodation just as Toloki and Noria in *Ways of Dying* live through.

After Toloki has fought with his father Jwara, he, Toloki, takes a decision never to return home while the latter is still alive and he literally walks from the village to the city, “to a wondrous world of freedom and riches” (Mda, 1995:59), “to search for love and fortune” (Mda, 1995:60). It is while involved in this odyssey after he has walked for many days and nights that he discovers, “For the first time in his life, and the last

time, he found himself having to beg for food. It was so demeaning to stand at a corner of a street in some nondescript town, and ask for a coin from a passer-by. He never realised it would be such a harrowing experience to be a beggar” (Mda, 1995:59). Toloki’s begging symbolizes Africans begging – worse, they are forced to beg. A beggar has no rights, all depends on the benefactor. The old man from whom he begs food and tells him of his “grand” mission laughs at him and asks, “Are all people such dreamers where you come from?” (Mda, 1995:60). Nonetheless, people have to dream even when they are desperate. Something has to happen. The old man tries to demystify the myth that rural people have about the treasures believed to be in urban areas. On arrival in his dream city Toloki fails to secure a luxurious permanent work and he has to take despicably paying part-time jobs, and at night, “he slept at the docklands, or on a bench at the railway station. He washed himself in public toilets” (Mda, 1995:120). This is an indication that the road to liberation is not easy. There has never been an easy walk to freedom. When Toloki learns of other homeless people who want to establish a shanty town on the outskirts of the city, he joins them and builds himself a shack, something he never thought would happen to him. It is both awkward and ironic that Toloki is very proud of this shack which he even decorates with newspapers and magazines.

Toloki tries to improve his lot by buying a trolley from which he sells food to factory labourers. This undertaking is also cut short by the apartheid laws which do not allow street vendors and hawkers. This is reminiscent of the late Es’kia Mphahle’s short story, “The Coffee-cart Girl”, in which the inflexible law categorically instructs street vendors, “Black man’s coffee-cart ... not to operate anymore in the city ... makes the city look ugly” (2001:84). In turn Toloki finds himself being exploited by his homeboy, the stinking rich coffin maker, Nefolovhodwe, who expels him for failing to catch the thieves who dig up his coffins. So, in reality, the myth that he had about the city and its alluring promises literally ebbs away. Nefolovhodwe might be representative of neo-colonialism.

Noria, daughter of That Mountain Woman and Xesibe, the wealthy cattle owner, has similar misleading impressions about city life after her abortive marriage with Napu. In his collective community voice Mda informs the reader:

Before she arrived in the city, she thought that she was going to lead a cosy life. People in the village, and in the small town where she lived in a brickmaking yard, had painted a glowing picture of life in the city. She believed that it would be possible to immerse herself in the city's glamour and allurements, and would therefore be able to forget the pain that was gnawing her as a result of losing her son ... She was going to get a job, maybe cleaning offices, or as a domestic, and build a new life ... In any case ... the streets of the city were paved with gold and diamonds, after all (Mda, 1995:135).

Nevertheless, when Noria arrives in the fantasy city, "She had a rude awakening when she arrived. There were no diamonds in the streets, nor was there gold. Only mud and open sewers. It was not like anything she had seen in her life, nor anything she had imagined" (Mda, 1995:135-136). She finds accommodation at an old woman who was once That Mountain Woman's patient but she is only given food and a place to sleep for all her drudgery. One afternoon after Toloki has joined her, she comes home "carrying scraps of pap in a brown paper bag" (Mda, 1995:134) to share with Toloki, and Mda reports, "she tells him that this is how she has been surviving for the past few years. She helps people in the settlement with their chores. For instance, she draws water for shebeen queens. They give her food in return" (Mda, 1995:135). The only time she tastes meat is "when there is a funeral" (Mda, 1995:161). She too admits, "I have lived like this since I came to the city" (Mda, 1995:161). Both Toloki's and Noria's clothes are actually in tatters, as Mda (1995:152) declares, "a glimpse in her direction tells him that the petticoat has seen better days, and like his venerable costume, it is held together by pieces of wire and safety pins". When Vutha, her six-year-old son, an incarnation of the deceased Vutha, is killed for taking part in political activity and her shack is gutted, she has nothing left except herself. Like Toloki, the myth that she had about the city was deception as has been revealed.

Nonetheless, all is not lost as amidst these shattered dreams, Toloki and Noria toil to find new ways of living and not ways of dying. Subsequently, this ugly homeboy has a curious idea of becoming a Professional Mourner at the countless funerals in the townships. As Wenzel (2003:325) puts it, "he depends on death to be able to live". He metamorphoses from his old way of living and chooses to be a votary, an emotionally self-disciplined ascetic whose shelter is sarcastically referred to as his "headquarters" (Mda, 1995:14), public waiting rooms and toilets on the dockland.

Although he is a tramp, he vows not to collect alms and chooses to eat a different meal from the rest of mankind, Swiss roll and green onions, a queer combination of his own, which, however, “gives him an aura of austerity that he associates with monks of eastern religions” (Mda, 1995:15). Visser (2002:40) suggests that the “waiting room” in which Toloki sleeps, “is the perfect metaphor for the story’s opening situation; here people are waiting for change to happen; for their lives to take on new meaning, for a new way to live”. He keeps a shopping trolley, which serves as his bedroom wardrobe and kitchen pantry containing his theatrical outfit of black stovepipe hat, black trousers and a black velvet cape as well as his food and other belongings. To add to this, he cultivates a habit of not taking a bath but liberally wears offensively smelling perfumes, giving him an awful smell like a fetid animal. In spite of all these Toloki is determined to provide meaningful and acceptable service to the settlement at negligible payment. As one old woman says to Toloki, “I particularly invited you because I saw you at another funeral. You added an aura of sorrow and dignity that we last saw in the olden days when people knew how to mourn their dead” (Mda, 1995:109). Apparently, Toloki’s profession has both therapeutic and regenerative and restorative value surrounding death and mourning to the community, as Mervis (1998:43) affirms:

Toloki’s performance at funerals has a social function as well as an economical and aesthetic one. His role of professional mourner is a collective, social creation, based on improvisation, utilizing an arena troupe, and involving audience participation in terms of the payments and approbation he receives from the mourners for his famous graveside manner.

When Toloki stumbles upon Noria during the funeral of her son, Vutha, she is basically at the nadir of her life. Both her two sons have just been callously killed and her shack has been burnt down as Toloki later finds her “in a rubble of charred household effects” (Mda, 1995:50). Her uplifting laughter has also been killed by the cruelty of the world. Their coming together has a symbiotic effect on both of them. Toloki helps her rebuild the shack which they imagine will be, “a really elegant shack, without paper and cardboard ... a masterpiece” (Mda, 1995:58). Indeed when it is finished, it looks like, “a collage in bright sunny colours ... [and] it would certainly be at home in any museum of modern art” (Mda, 1995:67), in other words, as Wenzel (2003:325) states, “This colourful construction assumes a significant meaning for the

observers and inhabitants: it is compared to a work of art". The neighbours too are mesmerized by this shack as, "They marvel at the workmanship, and at how the plastic and canvas of different colours have been woven together to form patterns that seem to say something to the viewer. No one can really say what their message is, except to observe that it is a very profound one" (Mda, 1995:68). Mervis (1998:46) points out that the shack, "A symbol of the transformative power of creativity ... communicates hope and solidarity to the whole dispossessed community. It is also an important sign of Toloki's talent and personhood, and as such points to his social reconstruction as well as the start of Noria's rehabilitation." Toloki's creation also has a positive effect on the children who on the previous day accompanied him with disparaging songs and laughter, but today bring them water in small buckets and bottles to help smooth the mud floor. Though one of the songs belittles Toloki, he refuses when Noria tries to stop them, "Let them sing, Noria. Never stifle the creativity of the children" (Mda, 1995:68). Unlike his creative potential which was never appreciated by his father when he had won the school competition, Toloki believes that creation should not be limited as even in real life good and bad are complementary. After covering the walls of the shack with colourful pictures of bedroom and kitchen furniture and garden flowers that "the shack becomes a home and a personal lived-in space" Wenzel (2003:326), Toloki takes Noria by her hand and walks her through fantasy richly furnished "rooms" and utopian "garden", in what Visser (2002:41) calls their "momentary romantic escape from the pressures of existence" and as Mervis (1998:47) puts it, they are "totally absorbed in making fantasy a reality ... [and] Noria finds it both inspirational and therapeutic", while she, "recognises the power of belonging" (Wenzel 2003:326). Wenzel (2003:326) further mentions that,

Toloki effectively represents a hybrid identity who is no longer dependent on interaction with the physical delimitations of structure, but can transcend it to populate his imagination with images of home and belonging ... Similar to his job as funeral mourner, he converts a dismal shack and his limited means into hopeful possibilities. He has the benefit of a free spirit, which makes his dreams boundless; a valuable for survival and for building a rainbow nation ... Toloki uses his imagination to construct the future and does not rely on a defunct society to inspire him.

Noria too, realizes she has a duty to restore Toloki's dignity and humanity. She manages to wean Toloki from the myth of keeping his body filthy and reeking like a sty, as she beseeches him, "Just one more thing: please take a bath. Just because your profession involves death, it doesn't mean that you need to smell like a dead rat" (Mda, 1995:98). No sooner has Noria said this than Toloki metamorphoses overnight. The following morning Toloki who for many years "has been an incarnation of gloom and dignity" (Mda, 1995:99), fills the beach with pearls of laughter, and, "He laughs loud, until tears stream down his cheeks" (Mda, 1995:99). Not only that, for, "he goes to the open showers, and scrubs his body with a stone" (Mda, 1995:99) and "no one turns their back on him, nor do they cover their noses" (Mda, 1995:100-101). At the settlement, although carrying a bulky load of presents, "This time, he is not followed by dogs and children" (Mda, 1995:107). After performance at any mourning service he no longer goes about wearing his mourning costume but he changes into civilian clothes because Noria has told him, "At home, he must look like other men" (Mda, 1995:162), and not like a creature from outer space. Toloki's change shows the possibility of change. However, change can come only if the person who wants to change does something about it.

After Noria's shack has been completed, the neighbours help her with utensils she can use while rebuilding her life. Toloki is profoundly impressed by their compassionate helpfulness and remarks, "You are lucky, Noria, to have neighbours like these" (Mda, 1995:69). In response Noria tells him, "It is our life here at the settlement, Toloki. We are like two hands that wash each other" (Mda, 1995:69). In order to build this country, a white hand must wash a black hand and vice versa. Only then can true change, true reconciliation happen. With this remark Noria introduces Toloki to the concept of *ubuntu*. John Donne (1973:557), in his "Devotions upon Emergent Occasions, Meditation XVIII", mentions that, "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main." This means human beings necessarily depend on one another as they cannot manage everything by themselves. An internet article <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ubuntu-philosophy>, quotes Archbishop Desmond Tutu who notes, "Ubuntu speaks particularly about the fact that you can't exist as a human being in isolation. It speaks about our interconnectedness. You can't be human all by yourself, and when you have this quality – Ubuntu – you are known for your generosity ... I am human

because I belong. I participate. I share.” In Xhosa there is a saying, “*umuntu ngi muntu nge bantu*” which literally translated means “a person is a person through other persons”. Brown (2002:80) avers that *ubuntu*

is a uniquely Southern African concept which has to do with the way in which we see and treat other human beings. It encourages us to see the humanity of others and to treat all individuals with tolerance, sensitivity and respect ... *Ubuntu* means understanding that we do not exist in isolation, but that we are part of a community and are therefore responsible for one another.

Madimbhaza, whose home is known by everyone as “the dumping ground” (Mda 1995:166) keeps and looks after the unwanted children, “out of her measly monthly pension” (Mda, 1995:166). This is only possible because she has a magnanimous heart, a philanthropic spirit and the *ubuntu* quality. Noria, with one or two other women, out of altruism, lends a hand without expecting payment. This drives Toloki to conclude it is actually Noria, “who knows how to live” (Mda, 1995:169). It is owing to this restoration on both sides that Noria sees their need for each other, “We must be together because we can teach each other how to live. I like you because you know how to live. I can teach you other ways of living” (Mda, 1995:115). This is the reason why she rejects Shadrack who can merely offer her financial security, but cannot offer her anything better than money:

“What do you see in him, Noria?”

“In who?”

“In Toloki. He has nothing to offer you.”

“He knows how to live, Bhut’Shaddy.”

“He stinks!”

“Not today, he doesn’t. And he won’t stink again” (Mda, 1995:144).

Metaphorically the apartheid regime, with all the foul practices, made South Africa stink. However, now that there is a brand newly democratically elected government, the country will not stink again. The liberation myth has, therefore, cleansed South Africa of all the pungent smells it used to have. Toloki helps Noria come to terms with the tragic loss of her children. Hence, after she has narrated the heartbreaking story of their demise and Toloki tries to apologise for having brought up the subject, Noria is able to face it, “It is painful to remember. But we cannot pretend it did not happen” (Mda, 1995:150). When this has happened, the once “stuck up” girl rises

above her earlier pride to apologize for the way she and others used to treat Toloki back in the village. She realizes that for life to go on there is need for reconciliation:

“Toloki, I am sorry about the way they treated you back in the village ... about the way we treated you.”

“It happened a long time ago, Noria. I never think about it at all.”

“You are a beautiful person, Toloki. That is why I want you to teach me how to live. And how to forgive.”

“You are the one who will teach me, Noria” (Mda, 1995:151).

Noria becomes aware of the necessity for Toloki to heal the past which isolated him from other children, the past which made him suffer the shame of being labelled ugly and foolish, the past that made him feel an alien in his own society.

When Noria has succeeded in drawing Toloki closer to her, she gracefully takes the initiative to initiate with him a sincere intimate relationship when both are able to take their symbolic bath without shame of each other's nakedness. She also assuages his embarrassment emanating from the secret dreams he has been having about her as she whispers in his ear, “And Toloki, don't be ashamed to have dreams about me. It is not dirty to have dreams. It is beautiful. It shows that you are human. We are both human” (Mda, 1995:201). In an article titled “Takunyisa: Drinking and Dying. Zakes Mda's *Ways of Dying*” (n.d:21), the unknown author points out that

Noria apprehends and appreciates the simple things in life that make us human. Her spiritual depth is discerned in her comprehension of human values of love, beauty, and simplicity that draw Toloki closer to her. With humility and gentleness, Noria allays Toloki's anxiety and shame flowing from the secret dreams he has been having about her lately.

Once Noria has been helped to rise from her nadir, her magical voice which used to give Jwara the ability to create figurines is resuscitated to inspire Toloki “to draw pictures of human figures for the first time with a new ability” (Mervis, 1998:47). The almost animated pictures do not only entertain the children who “laugh and make fun of the strange expressions that Toloki has sketched” (Mda, 1995:199), but passers-by also stop to watch, “and are overcome by warm feelings” (Mda, 1995:199). The “new ability” that Toloki has to create may be equated to new possibilities and opportunities of development and transformation that the country has after attaining liberation. It is as if Mda is saying that during the apartheid regime people's ideas

were bottle-necked and they could not express themselves. But now that they have been liberated they have the freedom to express themselves to their maximum potential.

So in a way both Toloki and Noria, who left their village in search of love and fortune, attain spiritual contentment and are able to add value and meaning to life although deprived of material possessions.

On the other hand, Mda proves that this myth is not necessarily always appropriate, in other words, there is a reversal of the Jim comes to Jo'burg myth as noted by Cloete (2006:51):

Through Camagu, Mda shows that the opposite is also prevalent as people are moving from the cities to the rural areas in large numbers. The underlying theme is that happiness is not only confined to the cities, but can occur wherever human beings are as long as they are their own bosses. It is a fact that people in the cities are frequently worse off than those in the rural areas because of the following factors that rural areas offer: there is less crime, life is less expensive, there are more employment opportunities in the agricultural and heritage sectors, *ubuntu* and tranquillity prevail, while there is still a sense of ownership.

On his arrival at Qolorha-by-Sea Camagu learns the art of harvesting oysters and mussels by allowing MamCirha and NoGiant to be his instructors. By submitting to the tutorship of these two women, Mda discredits the myth that rural women are backward and, therefore, cannot lead but must be led. Apparently MamCirha and NoGiant have not been to school, yet they are neither foolish nor nonentities. The two women allow Camagu to teach them professional business skills and together they form a partnership and establish the seafood cooperation. It is clear that this business enterprise is generating reasonable profits when Camagu retaliates to Bhonco's accusation, "Those foolish women, Tat'uBhonco, are making good money that you will not see even I your dreams ... and they make this money from their own business. I do not own the co-operative society. Its members own it" (Mda, 2000:276). Camagu further envisages the possibility of a big industry emanating from this small co-operative, a dream that has come true:

The same will happen if the villagers come together to build this holiday place that will give travellers the opportunity to experience life in an African home. The villagers who come together to build the place will own the place. They will not be working for anyone but themselves. It will not be big and wonderful like the gambling city with roller-coasters and cable cars. But it will be ours (Mda, 2000:276).

Despite the obvious economic benefits Mda emphasizes the point of property ownership and shareholding, something uncommon amongst black people. Since the majority of the people in this business project are rural women their *status quo* will change as they become empowered. Moreover, as soon as their business expands, it is given that there will be job creation and subsequently poverty alleviation. The issue of job creation is supported by Koyana (2003:53) who states, "Instead of waiting for bureaucrats or corporations to hand out jobs, which are only tokens of empowerment, Mda suggests that true entrepreneurial skill is demonstrated in the ability to embrace the dialogism of place and empower not only oneself but also others." The success of this business venture, therefore, demystifies the myth that urban areas are the only places where people can find employment and enjoy life. Cloete (2006:48) notes that, "What all this connotes is that true independence comes from one's labour as the Sesotho proverb suggests: *mphe mphe e a lapisa* (always asking for things from others is tiresome). Although people should hold their leaders accountable, their future is ultimately in their hands."

If the supposed "Jim" goes to Jo'burg in search of pleasure, Camagu, the exile who has just returned from the United States of America, leaves Hillbrow, and comes to Qolorha-by-Sea in search of that romantic dream too, the pursuit of the enchanting sweet-voiced NomaRussia. While Camagu is still in the quest for NomaRussia, his eyes get

glued on Xoliswa Ximiya. He does not remember seeing anyone quite so beautiful before. Her beauty exceeds that of the hungry women who are referred to as supermodels in fashion magazines. It is the kind of beauty that is cold and distant, though. Not the kind that makes your whole body hot and charges it with electric currents like NomaRussia's (Mda, 2000:70-71).

Nonetheless the village men find her less charming because they prefer "plump and juicy" (Mda, 2000:10) women. Qukezwa sarcastically calls her "a frozen statue" (115), "your thin girlfriend" (115) or "a bat" (198) "because she does not know

whether she is a bird or a mouse” (Mda, 2000:198). Dalton’s wife, who mispronounces her name as “Kolisa Kimiya”, calls her “Now that’s a lady. Very educated. Polished” (Mda, 2000:256). Xoliswa Ximiya has, however, immersed herself in Western civilization to such an extent that she considers her isiXhosa culture and tradition barbaric and backward and dumps Camagu for believing in a Majola, for she cannot associate with such foolhardiness. In the meantime, Qukezwa, a foil of Xoliswa Ximiya, short and plump, with only Standard Eight, who does not appear to be a candidate to marry the learned Camagu, unnerves him. Her care-free attitude earns her scorn from Dalton’s wife as the following dialogue reveals:

“I don’t know what he sees in that crude girl,” comments Missis, as if to herself.

Still Camagu does not answer. He just smiles politely.

“She is a rotten apple that one. I am glad she no longer works here. I would have fired her long ago if it were not for John, who seems to be compassionate to the worst of these people” (Mda, 2000:256).

Qukezwa is presumptuous as demonstrated earlier. However, she teaches Camagu about the politics of both amaXhosa and Qolorha-by-Sea and he is gradually sexually drawn to her until their relationship is consummated in marriage.

4.6 The Effects of the Liberation Struggle

In *The Heart of Redness* Mda shows us how myth as a tool of liberation can be suicidal. Nongqawuse’s myth turns into a disaster when the awaited ancestors fail to arise on the appointed dates and times. This is validated by Stapleton (1994:169) who remarks that, “While this sacrifice was supposed to stimulate a national rebirth, the ultimate result was mass starvation and complete dispossession by opportunistic colonial authorities.” Once more the blame is attributed to the Unbelievers who refused to kill their cattle and also on the Believers, who sold their cattle off instead of slaughtering them. Consequently, the amaXhosa go through a scourge of famine. Giving the reader some glimpses of the starving Believers’ experience, Mda states:

Many Believers just sat in their homes and waited for death. Helpless mothers watched as children fell, never to rise again. Dying wives watched as the family dogs ate the corpses of their husbands. They

knew that sooner or later they too would end up in the dogs' stomachs. But then the dogs themselves would end up in some hungry families' stomachs. It was a dog-eat-dog world (Mda, 2000: 293).

This situation forces them to loot from their fellow Believers, Unbelievers or the colonists. The grim situation described here shows no hope for life. All is bleak and futile. As a result of the *status quo* the colonists take advantage of the defenceless amaXhosa and continue to grab more chunks of farmland on the ruins of the Believers' homesteads for white settlement. Most of the amaXhosa are forced to work as slaves in white settlements for food rations, the prophetesses are hunted down and taken to the Paupers' Lodge where they are detained. These deeds imply the demise of the hope of the amaXhosa which made Governor Sir George Grey complacently declare to everyone, "We are achieving what we set out to ... the amaXhosa are becoming useful servants, consumers of our goods, contributors to our revenue. Like the Maori of New Zealand, these people are not irreclaimable savages" (Mda, 2000: 296).

In *The Madonna of Excelsior*, the Immorality Act, a progeny of the Apartheid regime, was a myth that the Afrikaners held to of not polluting the purity of the white race by prohibiting marriage between whites and people of colour, but failed to realise this aim. Mda picks on the highly esteemed conservatives of Excelsior, the selected few who are supposed to be the guardians of the Immorality Act but contravene it. Johannes Smit is not only the provincial leader of the "ultra-right-wing Herstigte Nasionale Party" (Mda, 2002:88), but also an elder at the church that obviously disapproves of immorality and miscegenation. Reverend Francois Bornman is the pastor of the Dutch Reformed Church in Excelsior and is known "as a man of God who preached obedience to His laws. Laws against adultery and miscegenation" (Mda, 2002:75). Groot-Jan Lombard "was revered by all of us because he took part in the Great Trek commemoration of 1938" (Mda, 2002:75). Klein-Jan Lombard is a local policeman. All these men and others of their class are nothing but sexually corrupt Afrikaners who publicly condemn mongrelization between white and black, but become sexually perverted and indulge in escapades with African women. Johannes Smit lusts for black women, waylays them in the open fields, and "chased them around and played harrowing games with them" (Mda, 2002:15), to finally rape

them after seducing them with bank notes. Reverend Bornman, Groot-Jan Lombard and Stephanus Cronje have their sexual indulgences which Mda satirises as “great sport”, “partner-swapping orgies”, “escapades”, “their thing” in the farm barn. These men even go to the extent of establishing rules for their “great sport” as Mda asserts:

“Today we must swop, Stephanus,” said Johannes Smit. Last time you refused to swop. Every one swops. You can’t keep one partner all the time.”

“He will not be allowed here if he does not want to share,” said the Reverend Francois Bornman, fondling Mmampwe’s breasts.

“If they banish us from here, Niki, we’ll just do our thing in the sunflower fields,” said Stephanus Cronje with a tinge of boastfulness in his voice...

“So what do you want here if you won’t play by the rules?” asked Johannes Smit, taking his cue from the man of the cloth and fondling Maria’s breasts (Mda, 2002:53).

When the “cursed” children are born and the accused are arrested and have to appear in court, the magistrate throws out the case before they can be tried. Zulu (2009:320) affirms that, “The greatest irony ... is that in court Adam de Vries argues that the Reverend Francois Bornman and his friends are innocent men who have been framed by the blacks, despite Bornman’s confession of guilt to him.” This is done to protect the Afrikaner myth of innocence and decorum. Reverend Francois Bornman’s confession that he has not taken an active role in breaking the Act is false. He utters the following statement to the church elders while lying in bed in hospital:

The devil had sent black women to tempt him and to move him away from the path of righteousness. The devil had always used black female to tempt the Afrikaner. It was a battle that was raging within individual Afrikaner men. A battle between lust and loathing. A battle that the Afrikaner must win. The devil made the Afrikaner to covertly covet the black woman while publicly deserting her (Mda, 2002:87).

Reverend Francois Bornman thus tries to create the impression that the problem is not with the myth entailed in the Immorality Act but with the black female body parts that have become perverse to derail the Afrikaner from his inborn righteousness. Ironically, years after the Excelsior 19 case has been closed, “miscegenation had continued unabated” (Mda, 2002:115), for the Seller of Songs, Maria’s daughter and Viliki’s lover, is “born several years post-Excelsior 19” (Mda, 2002:196) and she is

said to be the “spitting image of Reverend Francois Bornman” (Mda, 2002:196). Through the Immorality Act the Afrikaner tried to preserve their self-identity, to have a race that would be spotless, but they have been proven wrong.

When Popi nags Viliki about absconding from school to work for the underground movement, he responds, “one day she would thank him for sacrificing his life for her and for the rest of South Africa” (Mda, 2002:127). After this long and painful struggle in which some people are given life sentences while others are forced to go into exile, the Movement emerges victorious. All political organizations are unbanned while all political prisoners are set free, hence Niki, Viliki’s mother, “[can] now sing the name of Walter Sisulu and Govan Mbeki and Harry Gwala” (Mda, 2002:141). Mda capitalizes on the South African political events of the period between 1990 and 1994 when the ANC helped negotiate a new non-racial constitution that led to the first democratic general elections in April 1994. It should be noted here that for the South African black people to find themselves queuing to elect their own national and local leaders has been an immeasurable achievement. Before 1994 the apartheid government did not give them the right to vote for or to stand as candidates in spite of them being in the majority. The apartheid system used to deny black people any rights such as freedom of movement, the right to own or occupy land wherever they chose, the right to marry across the colour bar and many others. White and black could not share the same facilities such as toilets, train coaches, hotels, restaurants, buses, schools, parks or escalators. To the majority of these black people the first democratic elections signified the end of all the evils that had come with apartheid. Mda reports that in these elections “the Movement had won an overwhelming majority in Parliament and in most of the provinces” (Mda, 2002:170), an event the South African citizens witnessed in 1994, 1999, 2004 and 2009.

As a result of the new constitution, public institutions such as banks have to conform to new regulations. Whereas in the past there would be two queues, one long one for blacks and another short one for whites, there is now “one queue ... for the colours of the rainbow” (Mda, 2002:153). Although this is a remarkable change, Popi also observes another appalling change concerning the treatment of white customers, “they walked straight to the teller, who would immediately stop serving the black customer to attend to the white one” (Mda, 2002:153). These are obviously rigid

conservative whites who by the time of the writing of this story had not yet learnt to adjust to change. However, of late the banks treat their customers as equals. The Land Bank has also changed in character as it has to service its customers equally, as Johannes Smit observes:

He was no longer getting easy loans from the Land Bank, for which he had previously qualified solely by virtue of being an Afrikaner farmer. Land Bank loans were now open to everyone, even to peasants in the villages, and like everyone else, he had to wait his turn for his applications to be approved. He now had to motivate before he could get a loan, and account for it after getting it (Mda, 2002:243).

Mda relates that when the local municipal elections are held the following year, “for the first time in the history of Excelsior, the town council had black members... and they were in the majority” (Mda, 2002:164). In these elections both Popi and Viliki become council members while Viliki is later elected as the first black mayor of Excelsior. It has been uncommon for black people to be found in significant management posts, let alone women. Ever since 1994 after the first democratic elections in South Africa, key political and management positions have been occupied by black people, especially because of affirmative action. Black women are also gradually being deployed in higher positions. At the time of writing this document, of the 400 seats in parliament, 169 of them have been taken by women. This means women have 42.3 percent of the seats. Mda is trying to interpret life as lived in South Africa. He becomes a recorder and preserver of his people’s struggles and aspirations. Affirmative action has actually seen the appearance of many black faces into very powerful and influential positions and this has been a source of ire to opposition parties as evinced by Tjaart who is against this practice:

“Withdraw?” asked Tjaart Cronje, with a scoffing chuckle. Have I spoken a lie? Are you not here because of affirmative action? Aren’t you people everywhere because of affirmative action? Didn’t I leave the army because it was absorbing terrorists into its ranks? The very people I had been taught they were the enemy of the Afrikaner race?”

“That has nothing to do with this council,” said one of the National Party members.

“It has everything to do with this council!” shouted Cronje, foaming at the mouth. “I worked hard in that army. I deserved a position. But did I get it? No! Instead a black terrorist was promoted. I couldn’t stay in an affirmative action army and salute an affirmative

action general. I resigned and came back to Excelsior to run my mother's butchery" (Mda, 2002:172).

While affirmative action might be a disaster to the Afrikaners, it is a boon to black South Africans. It is a tool meant to redress the injustices and imbalances of the past while restoring the dignity of the African people. It is also aimed at recompensing and empowering Africans who, for a number of decades were denied such opportunities. Kivel (1997:2), commenting about the advantages of affirmative action in California, notes:

There are thousands of examples of situations where people of color, white women, and working class women and men of all races who were previously excluded from jobs or educational opportunities, or were denied opportunities once admitted, have gained access through affirmative action. When these policies received executive branch and judicial support, vast numbers of people of color, white women and men have gained access they would not otherwise have had. These gains have led to very real changes.

The same can be said about the ANC-led government since 1994. Even so, if one looks at the composition of various professions such as law, medicine, architecture, academics or corporate management or higher-level government positions, one notices that black people are still underrepresented and much has to be done to get them into those positions. In this way the ANC led government will be demystifying the perception that black people cannot manage. It is also demystifying the wrong impression about women, namely, that they cannot be the head of organizations but should always be led. It is also trying to live up to the declarations as enshrined in the Freedom Charter.

Connected to affirmative action is the issue of Black Economic Empowerment. The programme was initiated by the South African government to redress the inequalities of apartheid by giving the previously disadvantaged blacks economic prospects which were previously not available to them, as outlined in the BEE Commission report:

It is located within the context of the country's national transformation programme, namely the RDP (Reconstruction and Development Programme). It is aimed at redressing the imbalances of the past by seeking to substantially and equitably transfer and confer ownership, management and control of South Africa's financial and economic

resources to the majority of the citizens. It seeks to ensure broader and meaningful participation in the economy by black people to achieve sustainable development and prosperity.

By virtue of the information contained in the aforementioned excerpt, formerly disadvantaged groups such as black Africans, Coloureds, Indians and Chinese who are South African citizens have to be empowered to own big businesses, manufacturing industries or factories and plants, mines, in other words, any type of business.

It is also as a result of the liberation movement that Matlatswetsa Location is electrified. Mda tells us that, "Every dwelling was wired up, even shacks like Niki's. Families threw away their paraffin lamps, and kept their candles only for days when there were power failures" (Mda, 2002:181). During the apartheid era electricity was a commodity enjoyed by whites and the black elite only. The rest of the black masses were denied this basic necessity. After all, they had wood and cow dung to depend on for making their fires. Today, the ANC-led government has not only taken electricity to the deep rural areas, but it is even subsidising all households that earn less than R1800.00 a month as well as all old age pensioners by giving them 50 units per month free of charge. In addition to electricity, Matlatswetsa Location now has telephone lines, a necessary service which black people never dreamt of having during the apartheid period. In *The Madonna of Excelsior* the Movement-led council also engineers the building of a public library at Matlatswetsa Location among snide and sneering remarks by an Afrikaner council member, Tjaart Cronje, who thinks that building a library for black people is a waste of resources.

One afternoon Viliki visits Adam de Vries's office, and on coming out he finds the little town of Excelsior bustling with excitement:

It was payday in Excelsior. The aged who were on old-age pensions had received their monthly grants. And their children and grandchildren were out to spend the money both on necessities and luxuries. Payday always caused such excitement. Even children knew when it was payday, because most families depended on the money that the government gave to the aged for being old. The most fortunate families were those that had one or two mentally or

physically disabled members. Their disability grants ... fed entire families (Mda, 2002:224).

Social security in the form of old age pensions, disability grants, foster-care grants, care dependency grants and child support grants is another remarkable service that came as a result of the liberation. Except for old-age grants, the other grants did not exist during the apartheid era. Even old-age pension grants were characterised by huge disparities between white and black pensioners as the former were regarded as having more needs than the latter. An internet article, <http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/download/1067.pdf>, published in February 2006 actually mentions that the Old Age Pensions Act of 1928 excluded black South Africans, while the 1937 disability grant was extended on the same racial basis. The same article shows South Africa in 2006 with an official unemployment rate of 26% while the poverty rate was estimated at 50%, figures which threatened the country's economic development. The same article mentions the following two objectives, "The first is to immediately reduce poverty among groups who are not expected to participate fully in the labour market, and, therefore, vulnerable to low income: the elderly, those with disabilities, and children. The second objective is to increase investment in health, education and nutrition, so as to increase economic growth and development."

It is apparent that without this social security system there would be disaster to so many families which depend on these grants for survival. At the moment, South Africa is facing a high percentage of job losses due to retrenchments, some of which came as a result of the economic meltdown. Such families have to rely on old-age grants or child support grants. Today many families are child-headed as a result of the HIV-AIDS pandemic. Those families owe their survival to child support grants or foster care grants. Child support grants have been expanded from all children below seven years to all children below 18 years in order for the programme to reach out to as many children as possible.

While the liberation myth has had beneficial outcomes for the black masses, it has not been without setbacks. Both the Affirmative Action and BEE programmes have been haunted by corruption as they have not eradicated elements of racism. Truly so, but it must not be forgotten that for many years millions of black people were also

denied specific job opportunities as a result of racial discrimination. So, the programmes have not been without challenges and controversies as Mda claims:

But the black empowerment boom is merely enriching the chosen few – the elite clique of black businessmen who have become overnight multimillionaires. Or trade union leaders who use the workers as stepping stones to untold riches for themselves. And politicians who effectively use their struggle credentials for self-enrichment. They all have their snouts buried deep in the trough, lapping noisily in the name of the poor, trying to outdo one another in piggishness (Mda, 2000:197-198).

This accusation is also supported by the Nobel Peace laureate, archbishop Desmond Tutu, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4035809.stm> who on 22 November 2004 attacked the programme for further enriching the already wealthy black people when he remarked, “What is black empowerment when it seems to benefit not the vast majority but an elite that tends to be recycled?”, and added, “Unthinking, uncritical kowtowing party line-toeing is fatal to a vibrant democracy.”

Affirmative action has also been criticised for sacrificing the best qualifications of whites which has resulted in skilled personnel leaving South Africa for countries where they would not be discriminated against, a concern also raised by Orania residents, <http://g.sports.yahoo.com/soccer/world/cup/news/orania-south-africa> who state, “how black rule has forced Afrikaners out of work because of Affirmative Action programmes designed to get blacks jobs” and add that, “An experienced white engineer could suddenly become a technical assistant to an inexperienced black employee.” A case in point is Camagu who has a doctoral degree in communication from abroad. In spite of his qualifications and vast experience, he fails to secure any job. Only in concealed meetings does the reader discover that Camagu cannot perform the “freedom dance ... his steps faltered” (Mda, 2000:32). This means Camagu does not fit in the current political state because he neither belongs to any popular political organization nor understands that one has to pay a bribe to get a job. This is one element of post-colonialism where the ruling party does the antithesis of what they have been elected for. Hence in his twentieth interview Camagu is confronted thus, “You have been out of the country for many years. What makes you think you can do this job? How familiar are you with South Africa and its problems?” (Mda, 2000:32). Another aspect leaders of post-colonialism are uncomfortable with

appears to be high qualifications as whispered to Camagu during one of the interviews he attends, “Unfortunately he is overqualified” (Mda, 2000:32). Realizing the existing prejudice he was never prepared for in the new south Africa, Camagu concludes:

He discovered that the corporate world did not want qualified blacks. They preferred the inexperienced ones which were only too happy to be placed in some glass affirmative-action office where they were displayed as paragons of empowerment. No one cared if they got to grips with their jobs or not. All the better for the old guard if they did not. That safeguarded the old guard’s position. The mentor would always be hovering around as a consultant – for even bigger rewards. The problem with bureaucrats of Camagu’s ilk was that they efficiently did the job themselves, depriving consultants of their livelihood (Mda, 2000:33).

Camagu is also accused of not networking, a practice he regards as below his moral integrity as he tells the big man from the government, “I will not allow anyone to lobby for me to get a job. Are we not all South Africans who should be allowed to serve our country on merit?” (Mda, 2000:35). In this regard Kissack and Titlestad (2009:157) assert:

Although he is a returning exile, with a university qualification and the prospects of employment and promotion through the inception of a post apartheid system of affirmative action, he does not seek to exploit such opportunities through processes of networking, but professes instead the value of opportunity open to talent and insists on obtaining positions through his own merit. Such a concern with more conventional liberal tenets estranges him from potential colleagues and benefactors, whose patronage he eschews because it would entail unacceptable subservience.

While Camagu refuses to give in to evil practices of corruption for the simple reason that he does not intend to be somebody’s slave, he must understand that in post-apartheid South Africa, he and the others he represents will remain dangling. This is a setback to the country because jobs are often given to people with neither qualifications nor experience. The advertisement of posts is frequently a mere formality because the incumbent has been known long before the process of selection is done as Mda notes, “He had not known that jobs were advertised only as a formality, to meet the requirements of the law. When a job was advertised there was somebody already earmarked for it. Not necessarily the best candidate, but

someone who had lobbied or had powerful people lobbying on his or her behalf” (Mda, 2000:35). This is not the only obstacle to getting employment as Camagu has to discover that, “he did not qualify for any important position because he was not a member of the Aristocrats of the Revolution, an exclusive club that is composed of the ruling elites, their families and close friends” (Mda, 2000:36). This practice obviously has a huge impact on service delivery and subsequently on the development of the country owing to the detriment of those who have the necessary skills and expertise. Although Cloete (2006:45) mentions that the events in the text are fictionalised and “may have no relevance whatsoever to the new South Africa”, she also quotes Holomisa (Michaels, 2005:5) who complains that, “Sadly, there has been a trend in the civil service of appointing only people with ANC membership cards who are often unqualified, incompetent or intent merely on their own enrichment.” It should, however, be understood that building a new nation has its own difficulties as Mda portrays these struggles in his novel. In order for a country to develop economically, culturally and in other spheres, social critics are needed to put a mirror in front of the nation, so that the nation sees what it looks like and try to wipe out any unwanted spots.

4.7 Mda and the Myth of Reconciliation

Unlike the protest literature of the apartheid era, Mda’s post-apartheid literature has reconciliation as one of his areas of concern. In *The Heart of Redness* the war that Nongqawuse’s prophecy started between the Believers and the Unbelievers continued from the first, the middle and also presently rages in the third generation. The Believers of the first generation were convinced that the prophecy could not be fulfilled because the Unbelievers refused to slaughter their cattle, a prerequisite for the dead to arise. After the Great Disappointment, when Mhlakaza wants to save his life from the furious Believers, he tells them:

The new people were ready to rise. The great Naphakade, He-Who-Is-Forever, was ready to lead them to our shores, driving more than six thousand cattle. But the ancestors of the Unbelievers still want to save their descendants from eternal damnation. They hope that the stubborn Unbelievers will change their minds and kill their cattle. Only then will the dead arise. It is for you, beautiful amaThamba, you the

Believers, to see to it that these prophecies are fulfilled. It is for you to see to it that all cattle in the land are killed (Mda, 2000:243-244).

This speech was volatile enough to inflame the hot-blooded Believers into vengeful and destructive action against the Unbelievers, as Mda asserts, “There was general fury against the Unbelievers. Believers invaded Unbelievers’ kraals and cattle-posts. They also stole grain from their granaries. And chickens from their fowl-runs. Even dogs were not spared” (Mda, 2000:244). This was a dog-eat-dog situation in which mayhem was the order of the day. For reconciliation to take place the Unbelievers had to condescend and slaughter their cattle, an act they were unprepared to perform regarding the value attached to cattle.

In the present politically liberated generation, that of the Zims and Bhoncos, the battle between the Believers and the Unbelievers continues. The Believers fervidly oppose the building of a gambling complex that is alleged to create jobs and bring money to the village in favour of a nature reserve. Each time the two elders Zim and Bhonco get together, they make certain to pass sarcastic remarks followed by bitter bickering. For instance, during the school concert, Zim “buys” NoPetticoat, Bhonco’s wife, to ululate until the end of the function. She does so until her voice dies down. After the concert Bhonco engages a group of ululants and hecklers who execute their duty so faithfully until Zim “sends *ing’angane* birds, the hadeda ibis, to laugh at Bhonco” (Mda, 2000:227). They, too, discharge their task with all the attention it deserves as they follow him wherever he goes laughing at him. When Zim dies, Bhonco is upset because by the time he will die

Zim will be familiar with all the corners of the Otherworld. And in the meantime, while Bhonco is still on earth, who knows what lies Zim will tell about him to the ancestors? Who knows what havoc he will create in the homestead of the Unbelievers? Zim will be a very unfriendly ancestor. A vengeful one who will not be appeased even by slaughtered goats and oxen (Mda, 2000:309).

The war between the Believers and Unbelievers is so intense that it is believed to transcend the boundaries of death. Both Zim and Bhonco persist in their notorious detestations and fail to settle their scores. Likewise, Twin dies before he can reconcile with his brother Twin-Twin. Mda asserts that even if Twin-Twin knows that his brother

died a raving lunatic ... he does not care. He wakes up every day with yesterday's anger. His heart is full of bitterness. There are two big regrets that dominate his life: that his brother died before he could gloat over him, and that he never took the chance to strike out at John Dalton, to avenge his father's head (Mda, 2000:313).

During the war of Mlanjeni, Twin and Twin-Twin, with a small band of guerrilla fighters in the Amathole Mountains discover the British soldiers with John Dalton Senior, in a camp hidden in a gorge, cutting off a dead man's head and putting it in a pot of boiling water. After the amaXhosa guerrillas ambushed the British soldiers, Twin and Twin-Twin discover that the decapitated body is that of their father, Xikixa. Twin and Twin-Twin can neither avenge nor bury the old patriarch due to the British-Xhosa wars. The grudge that Twin and Twin-Twin bear about John Dalton Senior has been passed on to the middle as well as the present generation represented by Zim and Bhonco, who also bear a grudge against the present John Dalton, the grandson of John Dalton Senior. For instance, at one time when Dalton accuses Zim "It is your forebears who were foolish for killing their cattle" (Mda, 2000:281), the following exchange ensues:

"This child of Dalton says our forebears were foolish," says Zim sadly. "Is that why his forebears cooked them?"

"Will you ever forget about that?" appeals Dalton. "You people are just like Bhonco. Whenever you don't see eye to eye on the smallest of things, you bring up this cooking business!" (Mda, 2000:282).

When the Unbelievers fail to bring urban development to Qolorha, and Zim dies to join the ancestors, Bhonco gets disillusioned and blames everything on the headless ancestor whose head he thinks should be restored, as Mda states:

Bhonco feels that everything has gone wrong for him. He must avenge Xikixa's head. Somehow it must be restored. Dalton must speak to his ancestors to see to it that Xikixa's head is restored. Only then will things come right for Bhonco and his divided homestead (Mda, 2000:315).

In Bhonco's opinion, for reconciliation to take place, Dalton should ask his ancestors to reinstate the head of Xikixa, the original ancestor whose head was boiled in a cauldron by the British soldiers. This should be done to bring unity to his "divided homestead" (Mda, 2000:315). Dalton fails to understand Bhonco's request and it nearly costs him his life. Nevertheless, Mda is convinced that black and white can live

together amicably if they respect each other as proven by John Dalton and Camagu who hold hands and save Qolorha-by-Sea from capitalist exploitation. Subsequently, when Dalton is recovering at a hospital in East London after being seriously injured by the raving Bhonco, Camagu tells Dalton:

“You must get well soon, John,” says Camagu sincerely. “This rivalry of ours is bad. Our feud has lasted for too many years. Five. Almost six. And for what? Nothing! There is room for both the holiday camp and the cultural village at Qolorha. We must all work together ... We need your business expertise at the holiday camp” (Mda, 2000:319).

In response to this proposal Dalton groans his agreement, a sign that he is ready and willing to extend a hand of reconciliation. Brown (2005:136) states, “Dalton becomes part of a possible reunification with Camagu ... The symbolic implications are apparent because it is the ‘business expertise’ of Dalton that Camagu seeks; however, Mda does not support a simple problem-free unification, for there remains the possibility of the gambling complex built by the powers that be.”

Some white cottage owners at Qolorha-by-Sea find the new political dispensation intolerable and decide to leave for Orania, the Afrikaner homeland in South Africa. Dalton is so angered by this mentality that he bursts out:

“Yes, you prided yourselves as liberals,” admits Dalton. “But now you can’t face the reality of a black-dominated government. It is clear that while you were shouting against the injustices of the system, secretly you thanked God for the National Party which introduced and preserved that very system for forty-six years” (Mda, 2000:161).

It is well known that when the ANC-led government came to power in 1994 a number of white people left South Africa to live abroad or in Orania because they could not reconcile themselves to the idea of being equal with blacks. One of these cottage owners has become so cynical that he finds Dalton’s forbearance so odd that he sneers, “The man has mastered the art of licking the backsides of the blacks. He has even joined the ruling party” (Mda, 2000:161). Orania, however, is not fictional or imaginary. It is a real little Afrikaner kingdom in the Northern Cape inhabited by the ultra-conservative Afrikaners who cannot cope with the new South Africa after the collapse of apartheid. Carpenter (2010:1) mentions the following about the origin of Orania after Nelson Mandela is released from prison in 1990:

This is when a missionary named Carel Boshoff, the son-in-law of Hendrik Verwoerd, the architect of apartheid, banded with a group of 40 families to buy a mostly abandoned government construction camp and turn it into Orania. From the beginning, the idea was to separate. Orania had its own flag and its own currency (the ora, the first three letters of the town's name) and set out to build something self sustaining. Now, the 700 or so residents of Orania live as if it is their own country.

The town has made itself 100% white and cannot live side-by-side with black people. Carpenter further mentions that when Carel (1V), Boshoff's son and community leader, is asked who he considers to be his president, he "rumbles for a moment, talking about how people see government in different ways ... [and] finally says, 'Right here,' and points to the ground at his feet." The same Carel (1V) is quoted as having said, "There is no reason a country as diverse as South Africa should be united and be together". This granted, the residents of Orania have no intention of reconciling with the rest of the South African people. It is apparent that they continue to harbour the myth of white supremacy. They tend to regard black people as sub-human, the nonentities and scum of the world. Hence their contemptuous disregard for the officially and democratically elected president of South Africa. As long as he is black they have nothing to do with him and his ANC-led government. Theirs is a determination to preserve their language and culture. Consequently, it is Afrikaans, not English or any other language that is spoken here. Surely this is another myth to liberate themselves from a black dominated government. Cloete (2006:51) makes an unqualified comment on this aspect:

Resultantly, many people came to believe that white and black South Africans were like a lion and a lamb whose peaceful existence could only be realised in the world-after. Despite such dissuasive thinking, Mda's narrative exposes racism as a false ideology that must never be countenanced. In fact, those who revel in conflict between white and black South Africans on account of their skin colour should realize that racial differences are no longer of any importance in relations between whites and blacks. Of course, as in any society, there would be a small minority who would stubbornly cling to archaic beliefs that black and white people are not meant for each other as reconciliation between them would remain an empty dream.

When the story comes to a close the amaXhosa and the colonists are miles away from the question of coming together to negotiate any form of settlement. Actually, once The Man Who Named Ten Rivers is certain of the conquest of the amaXhosa

he goes about wildly declaring, “Finally I have pacified Xhosaland” (Mda, 2000:312). Grey’s statement reminds us of the conceited District Commissioner in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958:148), who intends to write a paragraph about Okonkwo’s incident in which he kills a messenger and hangs himself. He plans to title his book, *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*, despite his lack of understanding of the people and their customs. Mda too marvels at this pacification and with his satiric tone quickly disputes:

Pacified homes are in ruins. Pacified men register themselves as pacified labourers in the emerging towns. Pacified men in their emaciated thousands. Pacified women remain to tend the soil and build pacified families. When pacified men return, their homesteads have been moved elsewhere, and crammed into tiny pacified villages. Their pacified fields have become rich settler farmlands (Mda, 2000:312).

Sir George Grey is satisfied that at long last the whites would rule and control the blacks without resistance since their enemies, the amaXhosa, have been subdued. It is ironical that Sir George Grey believes he is achieving the objective of his mission while the original owners of the land have been utterly degraded and dehumanised. They are regarded as the real scum, the downtrodden of the earth as they have no land they can ever call their own. They cannot make choices as to where they want to live. They cannot make decisions about their own lives and as such nothing can placate them until this situation is reversed. The repetition of the word “pacified” is indicative of what the white people wanted to do, to bring peace, but peace that would further save them. In other words, their pacification intention was to let things be basically the same, because as Mda states, “Their pacified fields have become rich settler farmlands.”

In *The Madonna of Excelsior*, Mda shows the reader possibilities of reconciliation as well. The novel proves that myth can be a successful tool of liberation as we observe in Mda’s revelation of the reconciliations which eventually take place. Niki’s escapades with Stephanus Cronje which result in the birth of Popi offend both her husband and her in-laws and consequently they start marginalizing her for the disgrace she has caused the family. Out of bitterness, Pule, Niki’s husband, who is an employee at the Welkom mines, stops sending her money and literally deserts her. Nonetheless, Mda flouts the frame of mind that the Pule family has of spurning

Niki for getting a child outside wedlock. Pule's relatives from Thaba Nchu bring presents to celebrate Popi's "passage into the ranks of the Young Women's Union of the Methodist Church" (Mda, 2002:123). Niki's in-laws have decided to accept Popi, "even though at first they had kept their distance from Niki, and had said that they would have nothing to do with a woman who had brought so much shame to their family" (Mda, 2002:124).

Mda reveals that forgiveness is possible even to once hostile enemies when Sekatle, the rich businessman who worked for the apartheid regime before the liberation applies to join the Movement. At first Viliki objects to Sekatle's application because the latter is a shrewd opportunist, but when Popi pleads her case, "Where is your spirit of reconciliation, Viliki? We forgave the Boers who oppressed and killed us for three hundred years. We are reconciling with them now. Why can't we reconcile with our own people, too?" (Mda, 2002:181), he concedes and they reconcile. It is regrettable that this reconciliation brings about both Viliki and Popi's demise when Sekatle orchestrates their expulsion from their councillorships.

Mda destroys the myth of the whites that all blacks are communists as is evinced in the conversation between Tjaart Cronje and Adam de Vries regarding the release of political prisoners:

"The Afrikaner will never bite the dust," asserted Adam de Vries. "We are releasing communists from jail," said Tjaart Cronje standing his ground. "We are allowing terrorists to come back into the country. We are now negotiating with them to be part of our government. Things are happening today that are inconceivable" (Mda, 2002:148).

Having grown up in a racist environment which never prepared the Afrikaner to see a black person as being equal to him, Tjaart fails to see the wisdom of a negotiated settlement. To him the political prisoners being released are nothing but criminals who should stay behind bars. As a result, when he is elected as a member of the local municipality his attitude towards his fellow black councillors is acrimonious, pessimistic and antagonistic. He continues to see blacks as rustic, barbaric, uncouth, and savages only capable of lawlessness and heathenism.

Notwithstanding this some farmers and interested individuals with developmental programmes that are aimed at supporting emerging black farmers take this opportunity to extend a hand of reconciliation to one another. Adam de Vries, for instance, who is a board member of the newly-formed Excelsior Development Trust, occasionally calls at Niki's apiary to persuade her, "I can help you to expand your bee-keeping enterprise and make it financially viable" (Mda, 2002:230). Unfortunately, Niki has her own mind and does not give in. The same De Vries helps with the recruitment of other farmers such as Johannes Smit to this Trust so that they can mentor the up-and-coming black farmers, something never dreamt of during the apartheid years. Zulu (2009:324) states that the Trust, "provides a common contact zone for working together ... creates a powerful transformative space that enables blacks and whites to collaborate on nation-building projects ... transforming South Africa by offering trans-cultural modes of representation, which are reciprocal transferences of culture". Once Jacomina, Tjaart Cronje's wife, having observed how anger and bitterness were destroying her husband, and realizing the necessity and benefits of reconciliation, she approaches her husband and advises him, "Maybe you should reconsider your stand too, Tjaart... Maybe it is better for all of us to be part of this new South Africa" (Mda, 2002:254). Zulu (2009:328) as well mentions that

This is the collective voice of the Afrikaner people who want to change and to advise their fellow Afrikaners that the new South Africa has become the luminal contact zone for cultural contestations that foster positive social change. The collective voice seems to teach the Afrikaner who resist inhabiting this luminal space that they isolate themselves at their peril and that it is useless to harbour eternal racial hatred. Those who still prefer to remain in the old South Africa, wallowing in their anger and lamenting their betrayal by their fellow white brothers and leaders, the way Tjaart Cronje and Johannes Smit do, should instead embrace the challenges of the new democracy.

Unfortunately, Tjaart regards reconciliation as a betrayal of the Afrikaner ideals as well as the apartheid moral values which were regarded as God-given and, therefore, have to be defended. Tjaart gets overwrought and collapses into a delirium as Mda recounts:

He was ranting about the betrayal of the elders. He was raving that he had fought wars on behalf of Adam de Vries, whose generation had never died at the border nor faced petrol bombs in the black townships. And now he had made an about-turn, taking many good

Afrikaners with him. He would remain true to Afrikaner values even if everyone left to join the enemy camp. He was prepared to fight a lonely war (Mda, 2002:255).

Ironically, while the hallucinating Tjaart is still on his deathbed, he resolves to reconcile with Popi. A brief background prior to this reconciliation will be essential. During the first municipal elections, both Tjaart and Popi are elected councillors of Excelsior. However, they lack any political tolerance for each other. At every session they have to tear each other apart with words. For instance, at one session Popi proposes that they use English instead of Afrikaans during council meetings, knowing this will inflame Tjaart. She sees Afrikaans as the language of the oppressor and as a result not suitable to be used during council proceedings. They argue and swear at each other to a point where Tjaart desperately retorts, "It is a communist plot to eliminate the Afrikaner from the face of South Africa. This is why the Afrikaner needs his own homeland" (Mda, 2002:178). To incense Tjaart further, Popi yells, "Why don't we give him his homeland ... Why don't he and his type just disappear into their pie-in-the-sky homeland?" (Mda, 2002:178). The fiery debate about the building of a public library at Matlatswetsa Location depicts another point of resentment between Tjaart and Popi:

"Are we still talking about the library, Mr Chairperson?" asked Popi.

"Of course we are," screeched Tjaart Cronje. "People who don't pay for services do not deserve a library. In any event, black people have other priorities. A library will be a white elephant. It's like casting pearls before swine."

"You call my people swine?" said Popi.

"Black people can't read," heckled Tjaart. "A library is a waste of resources."

"If there are no resources it is because you and your people stole them ... so now we are taking them back. If black people don't read, then we are going to cultivate a new culture of reading."

"What do you know of culture when you can't even shave your legs?" asked Tjaart Cronje, looking at Popi's legs with disgust.

"Tjaart!" admonished Lizette de Vries. "You can't talk to a lady like that."

"She is no lady," insisted Tjaart Cronje. "Ladies shave their legs. She doesn't. She is therefore no lady" (Mda, 2002:194).

The extract not only portrays the absence of political tolerance, but also Tjaart's lack of respect for human dignity. His fury is obviously politically motivated, having been inculcated by his mother who taught him to hate black people. It is, therefore,

important for Tjaart that even in the midst of his insanity, he is able to realize his misconceptions, so that he can come to terms with himself and then reconcile with those he has wronged. He realizes that since neither of them, himself and Popi, can be held responsible for the sins of their parents, nor can change what has happened, they must accept each other as half-brother and half-sister for life to go on as revealed in their encounter while he shows her their father's portrait:

"I wish you had known him, Popi," said Tjaart Cronje in a quivering voice.

"Known him?" asked Popi.

"Our father," responded Tjaart Cronje. "He was not a bad man."

"*Your* father."

"*Our* father. Surely you know that by now."

"I have heard whispers" (Mda, 2002:262-263).

It is, however, ironic that when an opportune moment has come for him to apologize, he fails to use it although that has been the aim of his inviting her. Cloete (2005:176) thinks that "Popi and her white half-brother Tjaart Cronje reach an uneasy kind of reconciliation when he as a grown-up confides in her that they had the same father." It is again during Popi and Tjaart's conversation that the latter gives the former a present of Immac hair remover "that will make your legs smooth" (Mda, 2002:263). Initially Popi is offended by this gift but she soon accepts it when she sees that Tjaart is serious. Moreover, when Tjaart tells Popi, "You are a beautiful woman, Popi. Very beautiful. That cream is going to enhance the beauty of your long legs" (Mda, 2002:263). Although Popi has resolved not to shave her legs perhaps due to Lizette de Vries' influence, after this tense encounter with Tjaart, both her confidence and dignity as a human being are restored, especially when she realizes that "no one outside Niki and Viliki had ever called her beautiful before" (Mda, 2002:263). Cloete (2005:176) mentions, "these words aid Popi in accepting herself as a coloured and eventually finding peace of mind in a world in which she has painfully been made aware of her otherness as a coloured". Zulu (2009:330) remarks that, "here, the Coloured person, despised by whites as a product of miscegenation, which was represented by Popi's struggle ... is finally liberated from the burden of white anger and self-hatred". What used to be her shame now becomes her source of pride as Mda (2002:266) puts it:

But Popi had been very busy admiring herself in the mirror. Lately Popi spent all her mornings looking at herself in the mirror, admiring her blue eyes, and brushing her long golden-brown hair. She no longer hid under huge turbans. She wondered why she had been ashamed of it all these years, why she had never noticed its beauty. She brushed it and combed it over and over again ... She did not only admire her hair and her eyes. She loved her yellow-coloured face and her long neck that had the spot where the skin continued to peel off. She loved her body and everything about it ... She rejoiced in her hair and her hairiness ... She enjoyed her own beauty and celebrated it.

Finally, Popi attains peace for her traumatised soul by joining her mother, Niki, in farming with bees as Mda (2002:269) informs us, "We knew that the bees had succeeded in filling the gaping hole in Popi's heart. Popi, who had been ruled by anger, had finally been calmed by the bees. The bees had finally completed the healing work that had been begun by the creations of the trinity". Cloete (2005:176) observes:

The use of bees in this instance gives the whole scene a profound significance as bees are associated with perseverance, hard work, cooperation, and tenacity. Bees may be small in stature, but they often achieve great success in their endeavours. What Mda implies here is that human beings can emerge triumphant against so-called insurmountable odds, if and only if they attempt to resolve them on their own. Bees do not depend on other insects to achieve their purpose; they do it themselves. While Popi's whole life has thus been a struggle to come to terms with her otherness, her being disposed as a coloured, she eventually comes to terms with her situation, and sheds her hatred for the whites who have so cruelly abused and scorned her. Because farming infuses one with patience and a sense of being one with nature, it creates harmony in disjointed human endeavours.

On the evening when Johannes Smit is asked to bring Popi to Tjaart's sick bed, Smit finds a fitting moment to reconcile with Niki whose maidenhood he robbed a number of years ago when he raped her in a sunflower field during a cow-dung expedition. During a cherry festival at Ficksburg he also tried to seduce her without success, but harboured a grudge against her. Subsequently, one afternoon when Niki and Popi were collecting cow-dung on Johannes Smit's farm, he let his Alsatian dogs attack her ruthlessly, tearing her arms and legs. All these incidents turned out to be a life-long sore to Niki, hence Johannes Smit deems it vital to reconcile with her as he whispers an apology to her:

“This is a good opportunity to speak with you, Niki,” said Johannes Smit as he drove out of Mahlatswetsa Location. “Why don’t you join our mentoring scheme with your bee-keeping project? It could benefit you a lot.”

Niki did not answer.

“I think we must declare a truce,” pleaded Johannes Smit. “We can’t live in the past forever. Bygones should be allowed to be bygones, Niki.”

“This is a strange way of asking for forgiveness,” said Niki. “I do not understand all this nonsense about a truce. I don’t remember any war between us. You, Johannes Smit, wronged me. You stole my girlhood. And now you ask for a truce?” (Mda, 2002:261).

It is apparent that Mda is concerned that unless both white and black forgive each other, it will not be possible to nurture their young democracy. It is, therefore, imperative that they sit down and bury the hatchet. White and black need each other, and cannot wish each other away. However, of vital importance is that Mda demystifies the philosophy that apartheid could work out. He further demystifies the belief that blacks and whites cannot live together. Thus Mda’s work provides the reader with a new voice filled with knowledge and wisdom of the past.

In *Ways of Dying*, Mda informs the reader that in the middle of one night, “Battalion 77, supported by migrants from a nearby hostel” (Mda, 1995:182), invade the settlement and perform ghastly acts of murder, rape and arson, deeds which inflame the people with anger and bitterness, in particular, the youth. However, during the funeral of the fifty-two people killed, the president of the political movement dissuades the masses from reprisal acts:

He called upon the people to lay down their arms and work towards building a new future of peace and freedom. He called those who had died martyrs whose blood would, in the standard metaphor for all those who had fallen in the liberation struggle, water the tree of freedom. He called upon the government to stop its double agenda of negotiating for a new order with the leaders of the political movement, while destabilizing the communities by killing their residents, and by assassinating political leaders. He further called upon the tribal chief to stop his gory activities, and to walk the democratic path (Mda, 1995:183).

The relationship between Jwara and Toloki sours beyond recovery when the latter is always labelled “stupid, ugly boy” (Mda, 2002:33) in spite of any good he does. For instance, when Toloki wins a national art competition, Jwara is not appreciative of his

son as he neither looks at him nor the books he has won. However, years after Toloki has fought with his father and has left for the city and Jwara has died, the latter persistently haunts Nefolovhodwe's dreams so that the latter should come home and carry his figurines to his son. As Margaret Mervis (1998:45) puts it, "The figurines are a metaphor for the reconciliation between father and son", in spite of the little value Toloki attaches to them. Notwithstanding, Noria, who had to sing for Jwara to create the figurines, suggests: "Or we could let them stay here with us, and bring happiness and laughter to the children. We could build a big shack around them, and the children could come and laugh whenever they felt like it" (Mda, 2002:211). So, the figurines may likely bring healing from the atrocities of apartheid and the period of transition to the children through laughter. In that sense the figurines will be adding value to society. Visser (2002:42) claims:

The figurines are strangely potent; they appear from the dust and debris quite clean and glittering; they cannot be stolen, and, containing Noria's spirit, they inspire pleasure and goodwill in their beholders. They appear in the threshold of a new year; a new time for the nation, and a new life for Noria and Toloki and their settlement community. The spiritual magic of Noria's song, the mysterious strength of the figurines and the pleasure-bringing power of Toloki's drawings are all part of the novel's answer to the question of how to live.

The novel thus ends with a vision of optimism and restoration of the lives that were once shattered and disillusioned. Toloki's pleasure-giving pictures inspire the children who will grow up full of hope and life.

CHAPTER 5. Recapitulation and conclusion

This thesis has unearthed several crucial issues concerning the importance of myths in any given society. Of the three countries this thesis has covered, namely, Egypt, Kenya and South Africa, which were all at one stage colonies of Britain, the thesis has revealed that each nationality has a need for self-identity as none of them could continue identifying itself through another nation. The thesis has revealed that the coloniser, wherever they could be peacefully received or met with resistance, had to use brutal and fatal power to overcome the native nations and subject them to their control in the name of Christianity and civilization.

The colonisers were better armed with modern and sophisticated weapons, while the natives relied largely on old-fashioned, traditional ones, making them unequal defenders. The natives rarely won the battles and suffered heavy defeats at the hands of the colonisers, making them, the natives, surrender in terms dictated by the latter. The colonisers evicted the natives from their ancestral lands and took as much land as they wanted from the natives, rendering them landless. They turned the natives into slaves in their own lands, introduced foreign administration systems including the introduction of different taxes that forced the natives to look for employment. In due course, the colonisers introduced their culture, religion, education, and other customs that they thought were superior to those of the natives. Gradually the colonisers corroded and eroded away the natives' long-standing traditions and cultural customs.

While this was happening, the natives became disgruntled and started looking for ways of liberating themselves from the colonisers. Whereas the researcher acknowledges that the liberation myth is central amongst the three writers, they manage it differently. It should also be noted here that British interest in Egypt was that they were strongly opinionated about controlling the Suez Canal which connected the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. Subsequently, except for British occupation and interference with the Egyptian political affairs, Mahfouz does not mention such things as land alienation or racism as grounds for the liberation myth, aspects which are deliberated on by both Ngugi and Mda. When dealing with the liberation myth itself, Mahfouz's focus is on peaceful negotiations, irrespective of the

length of time this would take. For instance, after the British victory over the Germans and the Ottoman Empire Zaghlul and his compatriots choose to appeal and negotiate their liberation from the British colonisers. Zaghlul and his colleagues visit the British High Commissioner, Sir Reginald Wingate to request independence as Fahmy reports:

“Amazing news is spreading among the students. Today it was all we talked about. A delegation or ‘wafd’ composed of the national leaders Sa’d Zaghlul Pasha, Abd al-Aziz Fahmy Bey, and Ali She’rawi Pasha went to the British Residency in Cairo yesterday and met with the High Commissioner, requesting that the British protectorate over Egypt be lifted and independence declared” (Mahfouz, 1956:345).

They also visit the Peace Conference to lobby for international support. The only time in *The Cairo Trilogy* when there is anything amounting to violence is the 1919 revolution in which most of the Egyptians participated and went protesting in the streets. It is then that we see students’ protest against Zaghlul’s arrest and imprisonment followed by government troops opening fire and killing some of them. Actually Mahfouz spends time lamenting the brutality of the British rather than the Egyptian attacks on the enemy. When the British decided to declare Egypt an independent country in 1922 there were no visible negotiations entered into. The decision was unilateral. Nevertheless, as mentioned in Chapter Two this independence had four reservations which mandated the British to continue to meddle with Egypt’s political affairs. Although 1922 is regarded as the official year of Egyptian independence, historically, 1956 is the year when all the British troops left Egypt. One’s assumption is that it was only after the total withdrawal of the British troops from Egypt that the Egyptians could decide on their political affairs without the coloniser’s intrusion. Towards the end of *The Cairo Trilogy* a violent organization, the Muslim Brotherhood, is formed. Its aim is to liberate Egypt from Britain even through violent activities such as their widespread use of suicide bombings where necessary, but it too does not wage any visible attacks on the enemy to demonstrate its intentions. Unlike the Mau Mau of Kenya and the Umkhonto we Sizwe of South Africa, which have since become defunct after the independence of the said countries, the Muslim Brotherhood continues to exist, and following Egypt’s Revolution in 2011 the party is likely to win presidential elections.

Ngugi's handling of the liberation myth differs radically from that of Mahfouz and Mda. Unlike Mahfouz who dwells on negotiations, Ngugi, in both *Weep Not, Child* and *A Grain of Wheat*, allows the reader to see the Mau Mau's drama unfolding. Ngugi allows the reader to see the violation of human rights in the form of land alienation, repatriation of squatters from the Rift Valley, abuse of people by the government appointed chiefs, neglect of the African *askaris* as well as issues related to racial discrimination. When the natives demand their independence and the return of the stolen lands without success they are left with no alternatives but to commence with a bitter and protracted struggle for their independence. Waweru (1988:4) declares:

These heated political struggles first took the form of peaceful negotiations by political organizations such as the Kikuyu Central Association ... and Kenya African Union among others. However the fruitless peace negotiations finally gave way to the need for a more violent approach to the struggle. In reaction, in October 1952, the colonial government moved against the Kenyan nationalist leadership with a view to crushing it altogether. This in itself marked the turning point for the freedom struggle, spurring men and women in unprecedented numbers to go to the forests to launch a bitter armed struggle against a clearly identified enemy: British colonialism.

Seeking ways of uniting the people for a common goal, the movement introduced the Mau Mau oaths that have been labelled as "savage" and "barbaric" (Millies, 2005:1). It is only in Ngugi's myth of liberation where there is the administration of oaths. Neither Mahfouz nor Mda has any administration of oaths in their liberation myths. The Mau Mau administered several oaths to individuals and groups of freedom fighters from the first Oath of Unity to the last Butini/Warrior Oath, depending on the intensity and level of the activity. For instance, the Oath of Unity was meant to build a strong solidarity among Mau Mau members. It was also intended to remind the different Kenyan tribes such as the Embu, Meru, Kikuyu, and others that the oaths should remind them about their goal which was land acquisition and ultimately freedom. The Batuni/ Warrior or Platoon Oath "was to prepare the younger squatters for physical resistance" Furedi (1989:113).

Although the administration of oaths was exclusively regarded as a male activity, Kenyan women activists helped in recruiting candidates to take oaths, a sign of their determination to also struggle for liberation. In *Detained* (1981:47) Ngugi mentions

that Me Kitilili, “towards that noble end, administered oaths of loyalty and unity to forge oneness among the various Giriama people and other related nationalities”.

The administration of oaths required widespread use of menstrual blood as evidenced by Kanogo (n.d), in her paper titled, “Kikuyu Women and the Politics of Protest: Mau Mau”:

All of the oaths incorporated features relating to female sexuality, and women were required for the performance of the rites. Menstrual blood was an ingredient in some oath concoctions, and various higher oaths including sexual acts, such as placing a dog’s or ram’s penis into the woman’s vulva and or the initiate inserting his penis into a woman’s vulva for a specific number of times.

The availability and preparedness of the women to undergo these acts was a clear sign of their aspiration for political freedom. These oaths obligated the initiates to apply more violence and renewed commitment to the course of the struggle which the women were clearly also devoted to. Presley (n.d), in the paper titled “The Mau Mau Rebellion, Kikuyu Women and Social Change”, (<http://www.uoguelph.ca/~terisatu/maumau/index.htm>) remarks that women did not only recruit members for the Mau Mau, they also participated in the oathing ceremonies, “to gain access to the political processes, to further their education, and to abet the return of alienated land”. The following is Presley’s conversation with Wagara Waomama, a Mau Mau woman leader who had taken an oath:

Q: When did you take the first oath?

A: About 1948.

Q: How many did you take?

A: Only two.

Q: Were you a member of the Mau Mau committee?

A: I was a committee member of KAU and later of Mau Mau.

Q: Which area did you represent?

A: I represented Karura (Muthurura) Kiamba.

Another aspect that is noteworthy about the Mau Mau is that similar to the Xhosa warriors in *The Heart of Redness*, fighting the British from the Amathole Mountains, the Mau Mau guerrillas fought the enemy fundamentally from the Aberdare and Karennya Mountains. This is affirmed by Ngugi (1993:99) in *Moving the Centre* when he remarks:

Unlike the armed liberation movements that followed them in Africa ... they had no rear or supply bases in neighbouring countries, for the simple reason that these were also under the same colonial enemy. Their bases were entirely among the Kenyan people.

For arms they depended almost totally on what they could capture from the British army, and on their own factories in the liberated and semi-liberated zones around Mount Kenya and Kirinyaga.

Again they had hardly any access to national and international propaganda to counter the stream of lies coming from the British settler colonial regime in Kenya and the Colonial Office in London. In the country KLFA depended mostly on word of mouth to explain their case and the progress of the struggle to Kenyan people. But still, with all the limitations under which they operated, they tried to keep written records of these activities; and to establish written communications with the national and the international community.

It is striking to note that while the Mau Mau targeted the colonisers, Motumi (1994:3) mentions that the Umkhonto we Sizwe's aim at its inception "was mainly armed propaganda, the targets being the sabotage of electricity pylons and other infrastructure". Although the Mau Mau did not win the struggle *per se*, the British government was shaken enough to revisit its policies regarding its colonies, and subsequently Kenya became independent on 12 December 1963.

Mda, like Ngugi, brings on board issues of land alienation and racism which roused the amaXhosa into numerous Frontier Wars against the British. When the wars failed to yield satisfactory results, the liberation myth in Mda's *The Heart of Redness* took a mythological turn when Nongqawuse prophesied that the dead would arise if the amaXhosa indulged in a cattle-killing spree. All this was done in the hope that when the dead arose they would drive the whiteman into the sea. This failed to materialise and the amaXhosa nearly got annihilated.

The South African new liberation myth that came about as a result of the notorious apartheid myth, though it appears in the other novels, does not get so much attention except in *The Madonna of Excelsior*, where Viliki disappears from time to time to carry out the activities of the Umkhonto we Sizwe. However, unlike The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the Mau Mau in Kenya, which were underground movements operating from within their countries, the *Umkhonto we Sizwe* operated mainly from outside South Africa. Motumi (1994:2) maintains that the MK cadres were mostly trained in Angola by Cuban and Soviet instructors in firearms,

engineering, politics, artillery, communications, military topography, military combat work, anti-aircraft management, and other areas. The MK cadres were first smuggled out of the country, trained as soldiers and then smuggled in again to act against the regime or mobilise and train others. However, entry into the country was not an easy matter. Suttner (2008:60-61) confirms:

Before operatives could begin to work, having made an often difficult entry into the country if coming from outside, they needed to 'lie low' and establish that their presence had not been detected. This might mean waiting for some months before even starting with reconnaissance or acquiring material for pamphlets or whatever was required. There were a variety of logistical necessities that were more or less time-consuming, depending on the extent to which a support network was present and had been prepared in advance for the cadre's entry. In the early years, many MK fighters had to fend for themselves and were not met by an internally prepared underground apparatus or any form of logistical support. Linus Dlamini, who was trained primarily in intelligence, entered South Africa without papers and travelled as a stowaway for 11 days on a ship, not eating for the whole journey from Dar es Salaam to Durban. Amos Lengisi and Matthews Ngcobo, also highly trained, spent a long time in similar conditions leaving Mombasa and entering Cape Town, also without papers, in 1966.

Suttner (2008:65) further mentions that:

In the late 1960s, despite heavy repression by the state, underground work continued. From mid-1965 until the end of 1969, some 831 people were convicted under an assortment of laws including the Suppression of Communism Act, the Unlawful Organisation Act, the Terrorism Act (from 1968), and the General Law Amendment Act. The types of activity for which people were charged included continuing to be a member of the ANC, taking part in organisational activities, holding ANC meetings, contributing or soliciting funds for the organisation, conspiring to commit sabotage, recruiting for military training, and undergoing military training abroad.

It was not until the Soweto students' uprising in 1976, referred to by Mda who mentions that the Afrikaner army is sending Tjaart to Johannesburg "to fight the terrorist school children who had been petrol-bombing Soweto since 1976" (Mda, 2002:133), that the Umkhonto we Sizwe's activities were also resuscitated. It is actually the 1976 students' uprising that brought about a new turn to the struggle for liberation. A political report adopted by the Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the South African Communist Party in April 1977 and transcribed by Dominic

Tweedie, <http://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/sectionc/sacp/1977/way-for-ward>, makes this remark about the 1976 riots:

At the beginning, the children of Soweto simply faced police bullets and flushed away the tear gas with water, or bravely hurled back the canisters ... Later ... they switched to operating in small groups under cover of darkness. Many police vehicles and 'Hippos' were ambushed and destroyed. Barricades were created to slow down the enemy and to provide cover in time of attack. Home-made incendiary devices were quickly in evidence. The people also turned their attention to the government collaborators among them and to the police informers. They organised destruction of property which symbolised the racist system of oppression which was carried out by well-planned actions of small organised units.

The young black students of Soweto expressed their anger at apartheid by marching, rioting and setting fire to government property, all these in protest against the apartheid regime and to show their determination for their country to be freed from its mean and ruthless administration. The aforementioned SACP political report also observes:

A most significant feature of this upsurge is the persistence with which the youth in particular maintained their revolutionary buoyancy in the face of the regime's response to the Soweto revolt, which was perhaps more vicious than any in our modern history of struggle. The mass killings on the streets, the torture and murder in jails, and the administrative actions against all forms of opposition, have been more intensive than in the post-Sharpeville and post-Rivonia periods. Yet the terror has not, on this occasion, created a mood of defeatism or submission; on the contrary all the signs show that the spirit of defiance and the search for ways of hitting the enemy continue.

During this time, except for the invisible underground activities, the ANC and other political parties had long been banned and, therefore, dormant. Many of their prominent leaders had been incarcerated or were in exile. Admittedly, therefore, the student riots gave the movement a new impetus because they carried on fighting until the apartheid regime came to its demise and as the BBC in <http://www.news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/5085450.stm>, remarks, "Domestic and international pressure eventually led to the release of Mr Mandela in 1990 and the country's first non-racial elections four years later." It is owing to the students' determination for liberation that this has been possible.

While the myth in *The Heart of Redness* sets off the struggle for the liberation of the black people in South Africa, there are a host of questions that remain unanswered, questions without ready answers. We are not sure if Nongqawuse's prophecy was evil, or as Twin-Twin suggested whether it was a product of a sex-starved youngster driven to prophetic frenzy by frustrated sexual fantasy, or whether it was instigated by white colonists to annihilate the amaXhosa, or whether the prophecy was a product of a religious experience. Stapleton (1994:169) also quotes the following assertions which he picked up while he was in Alice about Nonqawuse's myth:

"Nongqawuse was a British spy who was paid to destroy us." Another stated, "No, she was fooled by white men who hid behind some reeds and pretended to be long-dead chiefs. They convinced that silly girl to tell the people to slaughter all the cattle." Supporting this argument, yet another said that "George Grey found the black man's weakness – superstition – and used it against us. After surviving so many wars against the whites we never recovered from that disaster."

The extract confirms the continued uncertainty that has been there about what actually transpired for a whole nation to engage into such a binge. One can go on to ask, "If the *amaGogotya* had slaughtered all their cattle, would the dead have arisen?"

5.1. The Possibility of Absolute Independence from the Colonisers?

While Egypt, Kenya and South Africa, and even other African countries that had been colonies before can boast of political freedom, the question remains, "Are we really free?" Unless Africans become economically free and start owning big businesses, plants, mines, financial institutions, industries, and other big enterprises, then our freedom is lip-service because the masses on the ground will continue to experience hunger and unemployment. Mahfouz's concern with absolute independence is different from that of both Ngugi and Mda. Officially Egypt was given independence in 1922 but both the colonizer and the colonized knew that Britain had responsibilities to carry out concerning Egypt to satisfy its opinionated desires. Besides, nowhere in *The Cairo Trilogy* Mahfouz raises issues of neo-colonialism or economic standing like Ngugi and Mda do. In Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* (1967:187), on Independence Day some men postulate on the availability of jobs now that Kenya

has attained freedom, “Men stood or talked in groups about the prospects opened up by Uhuru. There were those without jobs, who wore coats that had never come into contact with water or soap; would the government now become less stringent on those who could not pay tax? Would there be more jobs?” Breidlid (2005:2), commenting on the role of Ngugi’s *Matigari*, states:

Matigari confirms the impression from *Devil on the Cross* that the expected discontinuity between the colonial and post-colonial times is illusory. In fact, any idea about a new land as a result of the liberation struggle is being queried and eventually pulverised as a result of Matigari’s numerous, depressing experiences after his return from the forest.

It is thus clear that the masses will continue to be victims of all forms of degradation owing to a lack of skills. Hence in his comment about the economic status in Kenya many years after its independence from Britain, Ngugi in *Moving the Centre* (1993:90), states:

Now you can think of independence as simply the removal of the racial barriers to social mobility but the pyramid structure remaining the same. Some Africans could now climb up the pyramid on the middle and top zones. But there was hardly any mobility downwards. In other words the white community still occupies the room at the top, and the Asian community the middle zone. In short although there has been some movement upwards for some Africans and Asians, with some of them occupying positions of real economic and political power, the colonial social structure remained essentially the same. Now this has resulted in the political alienation of the majority at the base. The base remained dissatisfied. The very things that made the people take up arms against colonialism – external domination and internal repression – still exist.

The question of skills is also an immense test considering the racial divide that existed during the apartheid regime in which the African child was destined to live a life of subservience as made apparent in part of Dr Verwoerd’s speech quoted by Rose and Tunmer (1975:266):

There is no place for him [the black man] in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour. Within his own community, however, all doors are open. For that reason it is of no avail for him to receive a training which has as its aim absorption in the European community, where he cannot be absorbed. Until now he has been subjected to a school system which drew him away from his own

community and misled him by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he was not allowed to graze. This attitude is not only uneconomic because money is spent for an education which has no specific aim but it is also dishonest to continue it. It is abundantly clear that unplanned education creates many problems, disrupting the community life of the Bantu and endangering the community life of the European.

The speech clearly spells out why blacks and whites could not receive the same education which obviously resulted in transferring only a few skills to Africans. It is significant to note that while the whites in South Africa deliberately designed an inferior education for blacks, the Egyptians were taking decisions against sending their daughters to school. The girls' lives revolved entirely around the family household, with only one ambition: to get married. When Rao (1999:166) asks Ngugi how he thinks exploitative systems of capitalism and imperialism must be overcome, Ngugi responds:

What we see after independence ... is, quite frankly, the continued deprivation of people, more misery, in fact, the gulf between the poorer nations and richer nations of the West is widening and within each of those nations, particularly Africa, the gulf between the poor and the rich is becoming really enormous ... I say, in a system that is not able to cope with that reality there is something amiss about it. Because development for me is really about development of human beings – not a few human beings that constitute an even society. I know that many people have been now educated into saying “But what can we do, what could be done, this is human nature ... There have always been problems ... Oh nothing can be done.” This is wrong. In my view the key thing is continuing to struggle all the time and not to be educated into accepting defeat, into accepting that very negative view of human nature that things never change.

The same can be said about land acquisition. Mahfouz in the novels under scrutiny does not mention anything about land acquisition or land restitution. In *A Grain of Wheat*, on Independence Day while Gikonyo is running, one of the things that flash across his mind is how the black masses will benefit from independence, “Would Uhuru bring the land into African hands? And would that make a difference to the small man in the village” (Ngugi, 1967:181).

However, Ngugi makes another allegation pertaining to political parties in post-colonial regimes but which he claims to be the status quo in the then current Kenya as he asserts:

The result of this economic, political and cultural alienation of the majority from their post-colonial rulers has been a perfect replica of colonial practices. In order for the post-colonial regimes to maintain themselves in power, they have had to repress democracy. They ensure that the people do not have much leeway in criticising, in organising, and even simply expressing a different viewpoint. There can only be one viewpoint – that of the ruling regime. If they allow democratic practices, particularly in the electoral process, the people might express their dissatisfaction by returning to parliament a different party or leadership. Kenya is now a one-party state with all the other political and social organisations banned or else integrated into the ruling party (Ngugi, 1993:91).

While this allegation might be true in Kenya it is not so in South Africa. Seventeen years down the line South Africa is still a multi-party state, with the ANC, DA, PAC, UDM, and ACDP, just to name but a few, are prominent in the country's political arena. In *The Madonna of Excelsior*, when Viliki is alleged to have brought the Movement into disrepute he is immediately suspended. However, he retains his membership on the council. As Mda (2002:206) clarifies:

The Pule Siblings remained on the council. They had been elected by the people and would remain town councillors until the next elections in eighteen months' time. But Viliki had to resign from the mayoral office as he had been elected to that position by the town councillors, the majority of whom were members of the Movement.

Although members of the Movement are in the majority they are out-voted as Lizette de Vries gets six votes and as such becomes the new mayor of Excelsior. Lizette is a member of the National Party that established all the vices of apartheid, yet she is protected by the constitution of the country. Mda thus remarks, "The unthinkable had happened. A Movement-run town council had elected a National Party member as mayor. In Excelsior, erstwhile rulers and creators of the apartheid system were back in power, courtesy of the former oppressed who had overthrown them in the first place" (Mda, 2002:206).

5.2 The Myth about True Reconciliation

I would like to put forward here the notion that nation-building is incomplete without forgiveness and reconciliation as has been shown by the three authors under discussion. In *The Cairo Trilogy* Al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad controls his family like a tyrant. Al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad's wife, Amina is not allowed to leave the house without his permission. However, in one instance when al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad goes away on a business trip, Amina secretly goes on a short expedition to visit a nearby mosque. On her way back she is struck by a car, making it impossible to keep the outing a secret. As soon as her broken collar bone is healed, al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad kicks her out of the house, in spite of her begging for forgiveness:

"Have you recovered?"

Amina replied in a subdued voice, "Yes, sir, praise God."

The man resumed speaking and said bitterly, "I'm amazed, and never cease to be amazed, that you did what you did ... Have I been mistaken about you all these years and not known it?"

"I take refuge with God, sir. My error was really a big one, but I don't deserve talk like this ... I have committed an error, sir. It is up to you to forgive me. My soul yearned to visit our master al-Husayn. I thought that for such a blessed pilgrimage it was possible for me to go out just once."

"I just have one thing to say: Leave my house immediately ... I don't want to find you here when I come back this noon" (Mahfouz, 1957:207-209).

Amina goes back to her mother's home to await his final decision whether or not to take her back after such "outrageous" defiance of his authority. One finds it unreasonable for al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad to send Amina back to her mother because she is being punished for going out to the mosque while he goes out every night to drink and womanize. Al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad comes to such a decision, only after Umm Maryam, his neighbour and the Widow Shawkat have intervened to reprimand him. For instance, Mahfouz (1957:244) remarks thus about the Widow Shawkat's encounter with al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad, "She told him frankly that he was excessively conservative in his treatment of his family. It was abnormal. It would be a good thing if he would act in a kindlier, more indulgent way." Al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad finally takes her back and as Maitzen (2009:2) puts

it, “she returns with joy to her cloistered existence, her family responsibilities, and his authority”. Even so, al Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad lacks the courtesy to go to Amina’s mother to reach a settlement with her. Instead, he sends his sons, Yasin, Kamal and Fahmy, to “Go get your mother” (Mahfouz, 1957:249), to which Amina’s mother responds, “Wouldn’t it have been more appropriate for your father to come himself?” (Mahfouz, 1957:249). Al-Sayyid’s conduct reveals the attitude that men hold towards their female counterparts. One gets the impression that had it not been the match in which the Widow Shawkat is asking Aisha, al-Sayyid’s daughter, to be Khalil’s wife, this reconciliation would not have been possible because al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad, earlier on indicated to Umm Maryam that, “The streams will return to their banks, but there is a right time for everything” (Mahfouz, 1957:238). So in essence, al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad condescends to bring Amina back because he holds the Shawkt family in high esteem, and he does not want to be labelled as being mean and irresponsible which might affect the intended marriage of his daughter into this reputable family.

Other than this family reconciliation Mahfouz does not show any reconciliation on racial or political level.

In *The River Between* the opening chapter introduces the reader to the antagonism that exists between Kameno and Makuyu which is exacerbated by the Christian stance that is anti-clitoridectomy. When Muthoni indicates to her sister Nyambura that she wants to be circumcised, the latter immediately replies, “But Father will not allow it. He will be very cross with you” (Ngugi, 1965:25). Nyambura says this based on her father’s unwavering disposition to female circumcision, as Ngugi (1965:30-31) states: “Joshua was against such initiation rites, especially the female circumcision, which was taking on a new significance in the relationship between Makuyu and Kameno.” Muthohi sneaks out and goes to her aunt in Kameno to be circumcised, subsequently inviting her father’s wrath because when Joshua discovers that Muthoni has left, he instructs Nyambura: “For once, I give you permission to go to Kameno. Go to that woman you call aunt. Tell Muthoni to come back. If she agrees we shall forget everything. If she does not, then tell her she ceases to be my daughter.” Joshua’s indignant tone reveals not only his lividness, but his embarrassment as well because he never expected such shameful conduct from his own daughter. Consequently,

when Muthoni refuses to come back, Ngugi (1965:36) declares, "From that day Muthoni ceased to exist for him, in his heart. She had brought an everlasting disgrace to him and his house which he had meant to be an example of what a Christian home should grow into." Muthoni finally dies from the septic wound without reconciling with her parents.

Muthoni's death intensifies the division between Kameno and Makuyu when the church takes insensitive action against children whose parents would not renounce female circumcision as Ngugi (1965:60) maintains:

The children of those who defied the laws of the church and continued with their tribal customs would have to leave Siriana. And no child of a pagan would again be allowed into school unless the child was a refugee. Even then the child would have to renounce circumcision.

Joshua too, as the spiritual head of Kameno and Makuyu, deepens the division between the two villages with his predisposed preaching. Ngugi (1965:84) states that "he (Joshua) enforced the church's morality with energy. All the tribe's customs were bad. That was final. There could never be a compromise." While Joshua maintains this stand Kabonyi, who has broken away from Joshua's church and stands in opposition to the former, fights to keep the tribe pure and together by founding the Kiama. The Kiama schemes to circumcise girls against their will during the coming circumcision rites in order to purify the land as Ngugi (1965:121) avows:

Uncircumcised girls were the objects of cutting attacks. Everything dirty and impure was heaped on them. They were the impure things of the tribe and they would bring the wrath of the ancestral spirits on the ridges. A day would come when all these *Irugu* would be circumcised by force, to rid the land of all impurities.

When members of the Kiama spy on Waiyaki with Nyambura the Kabonyi's deep seated dislike for the former bubbles up and he (Kabonyi) summons Waiyaki. Waiyaki, having taken the oath that forbids him to associate with uncircumcised people, is accused of being impure and, therefore, contaminating the tribe. Since Waiyaki and Kabonyi's views are so wide apart there can be no reconciliation between them. Subsequently, both Waiyaki and Nyambura are executed.

In *A Grain of Wheat* when Gikonyo is released from the detention camp and goes home, he finds Mumbi with a child by another man. He is so distraught that when his mother embraces him, he concludes, “Mumbi had gone to bed with other men in his absence” (Ngugi, 1967:99), and when Mumbi steals glances at him, Gikonyo thinks, “She is mocking me” (Ngugi, 1967:100). He imagines Mumbi walking to another man’s bed, and allowing him, “actually held another man’s dangling thing between her thighs, her flesh, had rapturously welcomed the explosion of that man’s seeds into her. And this not once but every night for the last six years” (Ngugi, 1967:101-102). This is reminiscent of Posthumus’ antifeminist soliloquy in Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline*:

We are all bastards,
 And that most venerable man, which I
 Did call my father, was I know not where
 When I was stamp’d. Some coiner with his tools
 Made me a counterfeit: yet my mother seem’d
 The Dian of that time: so doth my wife
 The nonpareil of this. O vengeance, vengeance!
 Me of my lawful pleasure she restrain’d,
 And pray’d me oft forbearance: did it with
 A prudency so rosy, the sweet view on’t
 Might well have warm’d old Saturn; that I thought her
 As chaste as unsunn’d snow. O, all the devils!
 This yellow lachimo, in a hour, was’t not?
 Or less; at first? Perchance he spoke not, but
 Like a full-acorn’d boar, German one,
 Cried “O!” and mounted; found no opposition
 But what he look’d for should oppose and she
 Should from encounter guard (*Cymbeline* Act ii. Scene iii 154 – 171).

When Wangari tells Gikonyo that it is Karanja’s child, he fails to sleep. The child’s whimpering gets onto his nerves and tempts him to “smash the child onto the floor, haul the dirty thing into silence” (Ngugi, 1967:101). Gikonyo, however, dissuades from this action, but decides, “I would never talk about the child. I would continue life as if nothing had happened. But I would never enter Mumbi’s bed” (Ngugi, 1967:106). Nonetheless, this apathetic attitude is short-lived when one evening Gikonyo, in a bad mood pushes the child from him. The child staggers and falls on its back, triggering Mumbi into an outburst:

“What sort of a man do you call yourself? Have you no manly courage to touch me? Why do you turn a coward’s anger on a child, a little child ...”

“Shut your mouth, woman!” he shouted at her, also standing.

“You think I am an orphan, do you? You think the gates of my parents’ hut would be shut against me if I left this tomb?”

“I’ll make you shut this mouth of a whore,” he cried out, slapping her on the left cheek, and then on the right. And the flow of words came to an abrupt end. She stared at him, holding back her tears ...

“You should have told me that before,” she said quietly, and still she held back the tears (Ngugi, 197:146).

This symbolizes that even after independence there will always be differences amongst political parties. This want of forgiveness and reconciliation compels Mumbi to abandon her marriage and go back to her parents. Wangari sees this incident as a threat to nation-building because as she warns Gikonyo, “Let us see what profit it will bring you, to go on poisoning your mind with these things when you should have accepted and sought how best to build your life” (Ngugi, 1967:153). Wangari is concerned about Gikonyo’s life without a wife. Even if he marries again he might not get someone like Mumbi. Mumbi’s life without a husband might also be shattered. Out of desperation Gikonyo yells, “Let her never come back” (Ngugi, 1967:153). In spite of the separation, when Gikonyo breaks his arm during the contest on Independence Day, Mumbi pays him a visit at Timoro Hospital only to be given the brush off as Gikonyo “shut his eyes and turned his head away in pretended sleep at her approach” (Ngugi, 1967:201). This slight makes her resolve, “But I will not go back to his home, not if he kneels before me” (Ngugi, 1967:201). Both Gikonyo and Mumbi are emotional and their broken relationship has reached rock bottom. Both show no room for compromise and this has a negative impact on nation building. Nevertheless, Gikonyo comes to his senses and perceives the necessity to reconcile with Mumbi. Earlier “he had never seen himself as father to Mumbi’s children. Now it crossed his mind: what would his child by Mumbi look like?” (Ngugi, 1967:212). For the fulfilment of this dream Gikonyo craves to carve a stool decorated with the figure of a man and a woman stretching their hands to meet on a child’s head or shoulders. The chair becomes the final symbol of accepting Mumbi’s child. Hence when Mumbi arrives at the hospital to see him, Gikonyo is keen to talk about the child for the consummation of the anticipated reconciliation but the following argument arises:

“Let us talk about the child.” ...

"In here, at the hospital?" she asked, without any excitement.

"Now, yes."

"No, not today," she said, almost impatiently, as if she was now really aware of her independence. Gikonyo was surprised by the new firmness in her voice.

"All right. When I leave the hospital ... Will you go back to the house, light the fire, and see things don't decay?" ...

"No, Gikonyo. People try to rub out things, but they cannot. Things are not so easy. What has passed between us is too much to be passed over in a sentence. We need to talk, to open our hearts to one another, examine them, and then together plan the future we want. But now, I must go, for the child is ill."

"Will you –will you come tomorrow?" he asked, unable to hide his anxiety and fear ...

"All right. Maybe I shall come." ... (Ngugi, 1967:213).

The passage reveals that Mumbi has taken a decision to continue her life independently as she is not willing to talk about the child. Neither does Mumbi promise Gikonyo anything substantial. The adverb "maybe" suggests a possibility but not a certainty. As Mumbi walks out, Gikonyo observes that, "she walked away with determined steps, sad but almost sure" (Ngugi, 1967:213). She has gained the confidence to brave the trials of life independently without the influence of a man. She fails to understand the value of reconciliation because it is being offered too late. However, Gikonyo is not discouraged by Mumbi's present attitude as he continues to think about the stool and even concludes, "I'll change the woman's figure. I shall carve a woman big – big with child" (Ngugi, 1967:213).

In *A Grain of Wheat* Mugo is regarded as a pillar without whom independence will be meaningless. In fact the community views him as a potential leader after laying down his life for others during the trench digging when he rescued a pregnant woman from being assaulted by the soldiers and homeguards. This incident even triggered the trench-diggers to start a song in his praise:

And he jumped into the trench,
The words he told the soldier pierced my heart like a spear;
You will not beat the woman, he said,
You will not beat a pregnant woman, he told the soldier

Work stood still in the trench
The earth too was silent,
When they took him away
Tears, red as blood, trickled down my face (Ngugi, 1967:156).

It is obvious that his reputation at the detention camps where he withstood the callous treatment by the soldiers has also reached the villagers. Hence, Wambui mentions, "Independence Day without him would be stale; he is Kihika born again" (Ngugi, 1967:156). Subsequently she connives with other women to use Mumbi to coerce Mugo to attend the celebrations. When General R. calls, "Maybe he who betrayed Kihika is here, now, in this crowd. We ask him to come forward to this platform, to confess and repent before us all" (Ngugi, 1967:192), one gets the impression that there is going to be amnesty for the sake of nation building. Yet, when the crowd shouts, "Taboa! Taboa!" Ngugi (1967:193) remarks, "more people cried, severally, almost thirsty for revenge". It is, however, ironic that the person the nation has faith in, is actually the man who has betrayed Kihika as he admits, "You asked for Judas," he started. "You asked for the man who led Kihika to this tree, here. That man stands before you, now. Kihika came to me by night. He put his life into my hands, and I sold it to the whiteman. And this thing has eaten into my life all these years" (Ngugi, 1967:193). This confession, however, neither mitigates Mugo's sentence nor saves his life as is evident with the arrival of General R. and Lt Koinandu who later come to fetch him:

"I am ready," Mugo said, and stood up, without looking at his visitors.

"The trial will be held tonight," General R. pronounced, gravely. "Wambui will be the judge. Koinandu and I will be the only elders present at the hearing."

Mugo said nothing.

"Your deeds alone will condemn you," General R. continued without anger or apparent bitterness. "You – No one will ever escape from his own actions."

General R. and Lt Koinandu led him out of the hut (Ngugi, 1967:206).

Like Waiyaki, a nation builder in *The River Between*, Mugo is assassinated for his crimes, irrespective of the respect he commands in his community. This is later confirmed by Wambui who, when Mumbi suggests that she could have saved him if she had gone to him, responds, "There was nothing to save ... Hear me? Nobody could have saved him ... because ... there was nothing to save" (Ngugi, 1967:209).

On the eve of Independence Day in Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* the white settlers throw a party at Githima hostel to bid one another farewell since they fear for their lives under a black government. Ngugi (1967:142-143) relates:

Mrs Dickinson, the Librarian ... predicted a holocaust after Uhuru. She and Roger Mason, her boyfriend had already booked a flight to Uganda, where they would stay to escape the violence that would be unleashed on all white people in Kenya. Now she was saying: "I tell you, I can see it all, in ten years these countries will be Russian satellites or worse still, part of the Chinese Empire -" Another woman broke in: "You resigned, didn't you? Now, think of that, and I -"

The spirit displayed in this extract is a lack of tolerance for black people especially when they come into power. These whites continue to hold the myth that black people know nothing about administration and, therefore, cannot rule. They fail to see the necessity to reconcile and help rebuild the country. On the other hand, this might be Ngugi's view that since Africa belongs to Africans, let it be governed by Africans themselves without the interference by other nations. This view is actually corroborated by Ngugi's stance against neo-colonialism.

While Ngugi allocates little space for reconciliation, Mda creates ample opportunities for that to take place as already been demonstrated. In the *Madonna of Excelsior*, the destruction of the myth of white supremacy has national and beneficial implications for reconciliation in a new and democratic South Africa. However, I would once more like to revisit Tjaart's failure to apologise to Popi after he had sent for her with the aim to do so. What is it that stands in his way? Niki suggests that it is "sin" that is eating Tjaart up. Because of this failure, when Popi walks out of Tjaart's room and joins Niki, Popi whispers to her, "I wonder what is eating him." Niki whispers back to Popi, "Anger ... it is as I told you, Popi. Anger does eat the owner" (Mda, 2002:263). If he cannot stoop and ask for forgiveness how does he expect Popi to forgive him? This brings us to the conclusion that reconciliation will always be controversial as revealed in the argument between Thando and Mandisa after their visit to the TRC hearings in Kani's *Nothing but the Truth* (2002):

Mandisa: That's all there is to it? We can all go home. All is forgiven.
Somebody died for God's sake. Someone is guilty.

Thando: You don't understand. That's how we chose to do it. That is
the option we took.

Mandisa: Then make me understand. Pretend I am an idiot. Explain to

me. A man sends a parcel bomb to two women and a child. It blows their guts out and he is not guilty of any crime.

Thando: It's not as simple as that. There are conditions to be met.

Mandisa: Damn you, Thando. This man murdered Ruth First in cold blood. In the most cowardly way. Just because Joe Slovo was considered Public Enemy No.1 by the apartheid government. A terrorist as they called him. Who the fuck gave Craig Williamson the right to murder his wife? And what did Mrs Schoon and her daughter do? How could those two women and a child overthrow the white racist government of South Africa? Remember what the lawyer said of him. He is South Africa's super spy. South Africa's secret agent abroad, with a licence to kill, whom in his illustrious career, could only boast of killing two women and a child.

Thando: Mandisa, we had a choice. We could have gone for revenge. We could have gone for Nuremberg-style trials but how would that have made us different from them?

Mandisa: For what in return?

Thando : Peace, stability, reconciliation.

Mandisa: You mean international reconciliation. They were so dying for international approval that they sold out. Did anyone of them think about the people? Did someone warn them that the people might want that revenge?

Thando: We have a country to rebuild. A nation to take care of. An economy to grow, jobs to create, houses to build, clinics, hospitals, schools and our lives. Where would revenge get us except more violence? Besides we did not want to give those bastards the honour of taking up arms against us in their defence and calling it a legitimate struggle. There was one Struggle, the struggle for liberation, our Struggle.

Mandisa: Then why is Craig Williamson a free man. He committed murder.

Thando : Because according to the rules and requirements for amnesty ...

Mandisa: He disclosed all? Yes. He told us nothing new except that he sent the parcel bombs. Who gave the order? Do we know that? Does that make him innocent?

Thando : No, it does not. He met the conditions set for amnesty.

Mandisa: Then why was there an outcry against him receiving amnesty? Why was everybody angry? (Act 11. i).

In South Africa the need for forgiveness and retribution led to the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by former President Nelson Mandela, led by the Archbishop Desmond Tutu in 1996. It arose, as Brown (2008:78-79) puts it, "out of a need to cleanse a society that had suffered a past of severe social injustices and violence [and] ... its main goal was to bring about reconciliation in a wounded society". This granted, the few conservative whites in Orania may continue to be a

teething problem in South Africa. Orania is not an imaginary town. It exists not theoretically, but practically. If these whites have created their own independent kingdom within an independent state, for how long do they plan to live like that? Besides, how does the South African government plan to resolve the situation? Mda too leaves the reader with unresolved issues with no immediate solution. This becomes evident that the issues around reconciliation will continue to nag the country for a long time to come. But then, there is hope, hope for a brighter future for people of all colours and political positions living together in unity.

To conclude, as has been the thread running through this discussion, literature records human experiences. Fiction is embedded in and arises from reality. All the texts discussed in this work have shown us a picture of the past which has a bearing on the socio-political, cultural and economic struggles of the present time and the time to come. While this thesis has made an attempt to show how myth has influenced the citizens of the three countries, Egypt, Kenya and South Africa to accomplish their liberation, it has not exhausted everything there is to be discussed. What the thesis has done is to make a small contribution to the corpus of criticism on myth. There are still vast areas that can be further explored.

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