

**AUTOBIOGRAPHICS IN NGUGI WA THIONGO'S *DREAMS IN A TIME
OF WAR: A CHILDHOOD MEMOIR AND IN THE HOUSE OF THE
INTERPRETER***

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DECLARATION

This project is my original work and has not been presented for the award of a degree in any other university.

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DEDICATION

To my Mom and Dad, Mr. and Mrs. Khodiya

You who induced in me the love of reading

To my brothers and sisters Nick, Molly, Lina, Netty, Jey and Moche

You the budding scholars who are a spring of inspiration in my life

To my husband

You a prayer partner in my life

To Val, Flavy, and Velma

You who give me the joys of motherhood

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ABSTRACT

The autobiography portrays characteristics which show its worth as a creative work. It is on this strength that this study attempts a literary inquiry into Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir* and *In the House of the Interpreter* to discuss artistry. This study shows how Ngugi's narratives employ various strategies to craft the story of his childhood life. Through autobiographical approach, the study examines the nature and the functions of autobiography to find out to what extent the two narratives are autobiographical in form. The study focuses on the aspects of autobiography as used by Ngugi to craft the narratives of his life. Further, it outlines how cohesion in the two narratives has been achieved. It ascertains that through deliberate choices of events and experiences, Ngugi succeeds in projecting the thematic concerns in his autobiography. His use of story, plot, characters, and the first person narrative voice as aspects of artistry results in aesthetic appeal and unity of his story in the two narratives.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Over the years, literature from Africa has continued to capture the historical developments of the colonial era in the African states. Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Weep Not, Child* (1964) tells a story characterized by violence and suffering under the domination of colonial power. Later when he captures his childhood experiences in *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir* (2012), we observe that the protagonist's experiences are parallel to those of Njoroge in *Weep Not, Child*. It is worth noting that the colonial era and its evils had an impact on Ngugi's life and this might have compelled him to narrate this historical event in his story.

Wole Soyinka in *Ake: The Years of Childhood* (1981) writes about his childhood between the ages of two and a half and eleven. Through his narrative we note that the whole memoir is based on memories and associations which enable the author to create vivid pictures of events which occurred then. Particularly striking is the use of the young narrative voice which is his choice of narrating of his story. Like Ngugi, Soyinka decides to write the story of his earlier years when he is an adult.

Writers who engage in writing narratives about themselves employ deliberate aesthetics to craft their stories. Their efforts to recreate past events and put them together in narrative form constitute the basis of artistry. These autobiographers employ literary devices and aspects of art to construct their life story which render them worth studying in an attempt to find out their motives for writing and also how the stories are crafted. In *Women's Autobiography: Voices*

from *Independent Kenya*, Jennifer Muchiri observes that, “when studying the autobiography as literary form, we consider aspects of art such as story, themes, narrative voice, plot, characters and setting” (34).

This study explores artistry in the autobiography as depicted in *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir* and *In the House of the Interpreter*. In doing so, it interrogates how the author employs the various aspects to represent, rediscover and reinvent himself, what I refer to as autobiographics, a term used by Leigh Gilmore (1994).

The autobiography is the account of an individual human life, written by the self. This was coined from three Greek words, “autos”, “bios”, and “graphe.” In Greek, autos mean self, bios means life, and graphe writing. The words denote self-life writing. This form existed much earlier than 18th Century with terms such as memoir and confessions being used to mark the writer’s reflection of life.

The autobiography is only one form among many through which writers speak about themselves and incidents of their personal experiences. There are other genres closely related to this mode such as diary, biography, epistle, and memoir. It is this last mode that I focus on. According to the online version of *The Oxford English Dictionary*, memoir originally came from a French term ‘memoire’, meaning a written account or a document containing the facts of a case to be judged.

George Misch refers to the term as “the peculiarly loose and apparently unregulated method pursued by writing” (23). He adds that a memoir does not have a person as its subject. This definition tends to demean the significance of a memoir. Giving a distinction between a memoir and an autobiography supplies favourable definitions for the two terms as used in this study. The memoir is close to the autobiography as both are based on personal experience and are reflective. The distinction between the two is that of intensity, depending on the amount of self-revelation contained in the memoir.

In distinguishing the two Muchiri observes, “the autobiography largely focuses its attention on the self, but the memoir devotes more attention to occurrences around and outside the writer. From the memoir we learn a great deal about the society in which the writer or subject moves, but only get limited information about the writers themselves” (39). Muchiri’s explanation shows that a memoir although about the self dwells on the people and events around the author. Therefore the term ‘autobiography’ has been used in this study to refer to its basic meaning, that of self-writing.

Ngugi wa Thiong’o was born in Kenya in 1938. He studied at the Makerere University in Uganda. He published his first short stories while a student there. He eventually became a professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of California. He has taught in different universities around the world. He is a novelist and dramatist, and he has also written children’s stories. His works are: *Weep Not Child* (1964), *The River Between* (1965), *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), *Petals of Blood* (1977), *Devil On the Cross* (1982), and *Matigari* (1989).

In the first three, the author focuses on writing back to the colonialists by giving an account of their deeds during the colonial period in Africa. The last three are about African leadership after independence. They reflect on the issues of governance that affect the society including corruption and moral decay. The author is also a non-fictional writer who has come out strongly to defend the use of African languages in writing African literature as seen in *Decolonizing the Mind* which was published in 1986. His other essays are: *Homecoming* (1969), *Moving the Centre* (1993), *Writers in Politics* (1997), and *Globalectics* (2012).

Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir which was published in 2010 captures the life of Ngugi as a child before he starts school to the time he leaves home after attaining the best position which earned him a place at the prestigious Alliance Boys High School. This work is his attempt to represent and rediscover himself at a time when the country is experiencing colonial domination under the British rule. He sets out to tell the story of his struggles amidst the struggle of the nation. The reader is able to relate with a growing boy who dreams to achieve his goal despite the challenges of colonialism in Kenya. There is poverty and family struggles not to forget a state of hopelessness that Ngugi has to experience even as he dreams. Towards the close of the memoir there is a dramatic turn of events where the protagonist almost misses the chance to go to school but eventually arrives in a cargo train.

The second volume of Ngugi's memoirs, *In the House of the Interpreter*, a sequel to *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir*, is about Ngugi's life as a student at the Alliance High School between 1955 and 1958. Ngugi narrates the lessons instilled in the boys through the institution and actually moulded by the then Principal, Carey Francis, the "Interpreter." The story

opens with excitement and hope for the young Ngugi who is going home at the end of his first term in school. This ends and a feeling of fear creeps in the young teenager when he discovers that his home has been destroyed and the family has been moved to a concentration village. There is a state of emergency.

His stay at the Alliance High School arouses in him the desire to understand the world around him. He also becomes a saved Christian and regrets that through the Christian principles he is unable to convert any of his friends to salvation. At the end of the memoir, the colonial government arrests him on account of not having paid taxes but thanks to the confidence cultivated in him at school he successfully defends himself in court. This narrative is a tribute to the school and Carey Francis whom he indicates played the role of father figure in his life.

This study takes note of the fact that “the central concern of all autobiography is to describe, evoke, and recreate the development of the author’s experience” (Abbs 6). Ngugi in his texts under study employs aspects of art in a way that describes his experiences artistically. It is on the basis of this concept that this study proceeds with the aim of examining aspects of artistry in the autobiographical form and how they are portrayed in Ngugi’s *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir* and *In the House of the Interpreter*.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

This study discusses artistry in two memoirs by Ngugi wa Thiong'o, namely, *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir* and *In the House of the Interpreter*. The study analyses the story,

the plot, the characters, and the narrative voice in order to find out how these aspects contribute to the overall artistry of the memoirs.

1.3 Objectives

The objective of this study is to discuss the aspects of artistry in *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir* and *In the House of the Interpreter* while showing how they are autobiographical texts.

1.4 Hypothesis

The hypothesis guiding this study is that Ngugi employs artistry in the texts under study which also renders them as autobiographical narratives.

1.5 Justification

I discuss artistry in *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir* and *In the House of the Interpreter* because most critics have paid scholarly attention to the thematic concerns raised by the author, and no study has been done on the two memoirs jointly. Limited research has been done on artistry in *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir* and *In the House of the Interpreter*. Hence the need in this study to examine how Ngugi, through the aspects of art, executes his purpose in the two narratives. Much more than this, Ngugi is a well known writer throughout Africa and beyond, this would imply that there are certain qualities in his identity and character which may be worthy of study. It is the autobiographical form that reveals the true identity of the author.

Ngugi's popularity as a fictional writer is not in doubt. His artistic prowess in fictional writing has received considerable acclaim. What is not fully appreciated is his literary artistry in autobiographical writing. Indeed, there is the danger that his fictional writing tends to overshadow the autobiographer in him. This calls for a study to examine how he crafts the story of his childhood and teenage years employing artistry and how this brings cohesion in *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir* and *In the House of the Interpreter*.

Therefore an effort to investigate artistry in the two texts reveals features unique to the genre of autobiography and brings to the surface the artistic way in which the author crafted his narratives through autobiography. This study may be used as a springboard to other studies on the same texts.

1.6 Literature Review

In this section, I review the literature that touches on the nature of autobiography, critical works on the autobiographical mode and works on the texts under study.

Peter Abbs' *Autobiography in Education* puts emphasis on an individual's experience in the cycles of learning. Abbs states that "education is not primarily concerned with the accumulation of facts and techniques but rather with the expression and clarification of individual experience. The centre of education resides in the individual" (5).

In this line of thought, Abbs shows that the reading of autobiographies is the best way of understanding the philosophy of life. In studying Ngugi's texts, there is a lot that one learns from the experiences he went through as a child and as a young adult. Abbs' argument motivates my

purpose to study the texts. Whereas his work theorizes the autobiography, I purpose to use his statements in analyzing Ngugi's memoirs in order to bring to the surface his world view from his experiences.

Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson in *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* discuss the relationship between the novel and life writings. They argue that a life narrator is confronted by two lives: the one known to the people and the self that can only be felt from the inside. This observation helps in this study in the sense that it leads the author to self-discovery which is one of the major issues this study has set out to examine. Smith and Watson define life narratives as "self referential practices that engage the past in order to reflect on identity in the present" (3). In analysing Ngugi's memoirs I strive to understand how the author engages the past in the hope of reconstructing the present which involves drawing a lot from history through the perspective of a child. Smith and Watson also examine time and the timing in life narratives. They argue that for a life narrator, his or her death marks the end of the narrative. This means that it is impossible to have a life narrative after the person is dead, in other words, an autobiography can only be written while the author lives. This argument is valuable for it informs the background to my study in the sense that it further discusses the nature of autobiography.

Jill Ker Conway in *When Memory Speaks: Reflections on Autobiography* observes that, "while we think we are reading a gripping story, what really grips us is the inner reflection on our own lives the autobiographer sets in motion" (17). She shows how autobiography allows us to enter another human being's life and mind and how this experience largely instructs our own lives.

Conway based her discussion on the development of female autobiography in the west. Although this study tends to bend towards the function of autobiography, it is useful in terms of how the gripping story is created by the autobiographer and indeed this involves artistry which is at the core of this study.

Writing about the structure of accounts in autobiography, Roy Pascal argues:

The common structure of accounts of childhood is given by its common theme—growing up. It is a theme peculiarly appropriate for autobiographical treatment, since the inner development is embraced in outer events. In this state, when the child scarcely scrutinizes himself/herself, he/she comes to be and know himself/herself through his/her awareness of others of the outer world. (85)

This view points to the fact that through observed things and people, the process of growth takes a lively concrete form. Later as the narrative moves to the child's adult life this is also accompanied by feelings. This observation is necessary in examining how memory as authority is used in selecting what to narrate and what to leave out since this mode of writing enables one to select what to disclose and what to conceal.

Norman K. Denzin's *Interpretive Biography* discusses the conventions of autobiography. He argues that within the conventions there has to be truthful statements distinguished from fiction among other things. His observation is useful to this study in that it aids in investigating the strategies of truth that the author cultivates as he narrates his story. It also assists in investigating Ngugi's fidelity to the genre of autobiography.

Henry Indangasi in “The Autobiographical Impulse in African and African–American Literature” observes that, “the writer of an autobiography, being the artist that he is, selects, reorganizes, rearranges, and reshapes the facts of his life in order to communicate a higher truth. A photographic reproduction of these facts would indeed be unthinkable” (114). Indangasi believes the work cannot just be presented as it is, plainly without artistry. This is after his analysis of non-Kenyan autobiographies but my study focuses on a Kenyan writer. This is helpful in examining how through autobiographics Ngugi is able to select, reorganise and reshape the facts of his life without merely reproducing them.

Indangasi further observes in the same article the important function played by autobiography; that of offering a voice for the voiceless. He gives an example by mentioning Camara Laye’s *The African Child*, Ezekiel Mphahlele’s *Down Second Avenue* and Peter Abraham’s *Tell Freedom*. He observes that, “these autobiographers in their narratives see themselves as members of an oppressed race championing the cause of freedom” (116). Indangasi recognizes the literariness of autobiography and how it does not only tell the story of an individual but also that of a people. This article forms an informative background to my study as it helps in showing how writers as members of a colonized group feel compelled to share their stories of fear and neglect as portrayed in the two texts under study.

Edgar Roberts and Henry Jacobs in *Literature: Introduction to Reading and Writing* focus on the role of the narrator in literary works and they argue that narration is important in a work of art. They observe that the narrator is the central focus in a story for he/she “brings the story alive and

clear to the reader” (60). Their view guides this study in establishing how Ngugi’s choice of child narrator creates cohesion in the texts under study.

James Olney in *Tell Me Africa* discusses the motives and functions of African autobiographies. His study focuses on some selected African autobiographies which include Peter Abraham’s *Tell Freedom*, Mugo Gatheru’s *A Child of Two Worlds*, and Ezekiel Mphahlele’s *Down Second Avenue*. He argues that for an autobiography to appeal to its readers, it should reveal artistic and deliberate creativity. He does not discuss Ngugi’s memoirs since they were published much later. His study is relevant in this case for it offers an insight to the discussion of the use of artistry in Ngugi’s memoirs.

Muchiri in *Women’s Autobiography: Voices from Independent Kenya* gives a comprehensive study of what an autobiography is. She posits that “Autobiography is a form of a coming of age story in which the writer is initiated into adulthood through knowledge, experience and understanding. It is an effort to define and understand the self” (28). Muchiri’s observation gives insight to the introspective aspect of autobiography. Although her study focuses on the female autobiographical voice, it helps in studying Ngugi’s representation of the self in the two texts because his reflections are based on his life as a child and as he continues to grow into a responsible boy.

Muchiri in the same book analyses Ngugi’s *Detained: A Writer’s Prison Diary* within the wider context of the nature of autobiography. Her study investigates the role of the narrative voice in the female autobiographies against the backdrop of male autobiographies from Independent

Kenya. According to her, Ngugi acquires a new identity in prison, a number. That he also uses his text to act as a voice for fellow prisoners (56). While Muchiri deals with Ngugi's first memoir, my focus is on his later memoirs and discusses not only the narrative voice but other aspects of artistry in *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir* and *In the House of the Interpreter*.

In "Mediated Plot in the Construct of the Theme of Struggle in Nelson Mandela's Autobiography: *Long Walk to Freedom*", Jairus Omuteche observes that, "The autobiography not only records the events of a changing society at a particular time in history but also notes those events as they affect the autobiographer himself or herself" (40). From his observation the history around the writer forms part of the autobiographer's story. Although Omuteche concentrates on Nelson Mandela, his observation is useful in analyzing the two texts under study in order to realize how events around the author are crafted in a narrative that artistically shows his life.

In the article "Ngugi and the Evils of Colonialism" Muchiri in her reading of *In the House of the Interpreter* focuses on the themes especially how these affect the life of the narrator. She brings out the feeling of fear constantly in the mind of Ngugi and how this contributes to interruptions of his life. She goes further to mention how the confidence instilled in Ngugi by the principal of Alliance High School Carey Francis would benefit him later on in life. "He refuses to be cowed by the injustice of the arresting officers and defends himself in court where he wins his case in an unprecedented manner. Indeed, the confidence cultivated in him in the Interpreter's house has

paid off.” (24). The article is valuable to this research because it enables me find out how these themes are created then re-membered to fall into an autobiographical category.

Aron Bady in “The Two Ngugis: Ngugi wa Thiongo’s *In the House of the Interpreter*” observes that through this text, Ngugi is able to look back at the parts of himself that he once sought to suppress. He gives an illustration of this “the name James Ngugi, the name Ngugi was known by at Alliance High School appears in the text only a single time. But that one time sets the tone for the rest of the book.” Bady argues that Ngugi somehow reconciles with his past in his latest memoir. Bady focuses on the narrator which is important in this study for it indicates from whose perspective the story is told. Although he discusses this as an aspect of artistry, other aspects like characters and plot have been left out. This study builds on Bady’s finding since it engages with more aspects as portrayed in the texts under study.

Audrey Snowden looks at the personality of Ngugi in *In the House of the Interpreter*. Snowden explores the development of a character through inquiry into the world around oneself as a repeated and poignant theme in the memoir. She focuses on the recreation of history and the search for identity. This argument is helpful in investigating how the historical events fit in the author’s narratives.

Kirkus has reviewed *In the House of the Interpreter*. He concentrates on the themes of dislocation, fear, random violence, and terror and further sees Ngugi fitting in different identities depending on the environment. He observes that Ngugi refers to the Alliance High School as a ‘sanctuary’ for the place shielded him from the Mau Mau Uprising and other regional and

continental crises. As he concerns himself with the themes, my focus is to find out how these themes are presented to portray the Ngugi that we see in the two texts through the autobiographical artistry.

In a review of *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir* Hazel Rochman refers to the memoir as “a moving intellectual odyssey in which Ngugi learns to revere both modernity and tradition but to reserve a healthy scepticism of both.” Rochman observes that the young teenager’s struggle with roots and independence is useful to history. The observation enables me to study how Ngugi’s story through the point of view and other aspects of art in autobiography create a gripping narrative.

Joyce Nyairo’s “Ngugi wa Thiong’o and the Redefinition of Kenyan Identity” is an attempt to appreciate memoirs as she reviews *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir*. She observes that this memoir is a narrative of confessions and suppressions and that Ngugi uses this mode to own up his ethnic hybridity. Nyairo’s work goes back to the times of Ngugi’s grandfather which is important in this study as it contributes to the understanding of the functions and motives of writing an autobiography; a part of this study.

From this literature review it is clear that a lot has been studied in the two texts but the studies have concentrated on the themes as portrayed by the author. There is a literary gap that needs to be filled in terms of studying autobiographical artistry which has not been carried out in the two narratives to examine how Ngugi creatively narrates his story in *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir* and *In the House of the interpreter*.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by the theory of autobiography. This theory informs and illuminates the study of self-writing and the issues that arise in the study of this mode of writing. The theory of autobiography is largely associated with Wilhelm Dilthey, who sees human sciences as grounded in the understanding of human life and experiences. In the course of his studies, Dilthey realised that the biography and the autobiography are both central in the discipline of human sciences. Thus, experience becomes a major aspect of autobiographical criticism since self-writing is a reflection of one's life. This proposition becomes helpful in my study for it gives me the basis upon which to examine the life experiences of Ngugi wa Thiong'o and hence arrive at the conclusion on how artistry has been used to render the texts as falling under the genre of autobiography.

Dilthey proposes categories which move beyond this experiential moment to find principles within life and mind; hence his emphasis on unity and coherence which is understood in terms of the relations of the parts of a life to the whole. This unity and coherence can only be achieved through engaging with certain elements of form like the autobiographical voice, the journey motif, the characters, and the setting of the story to eventually recreate a whole narrative. It is therefore the task of this study to examine how Ngugi makes use of the narrative voice he chooses, the journey motif he employs, and the characters in the narrative to present to us a complete and coherent life narrative that carries in it a sense of credibility.

To bring to the fore the aspect of truth, Roy Pascal, a scholar of the theory of autobiography, observes that it is through intensive study of the art of autobiography that one can establish the

element of truth. He views the autobiography as a strategy for creating the illusion of unity in a work of art despite the fragments of identity. His thoughts thus concur with Dilthey's arguments on the genre of autobiography. This idea of truth in an autobiography is largely contributed to by the manner in which the writer orders his/her life stories to form one whole narrative. I thus find this postulation important in enabling me to examine the extent to which Ngugi creates the idea of unity in the two texts by ordering the various constituents of his story in a particular way – an act of artistry.

Laura Marcus, in her 'Introduction' to *Auto/biographical Discourses*, discusses a number of tenets of the autobiography as what helps one distinguish an autobiographical work from other literary works. These include the concept of intentions, the motive for writing the autobiography, and the ethics. An examination and interpretation of these concepts lie at the centre of understanding artistry in any autobiographical text. For, the aim of a writer of autobiography is to order and organise his/her memory into a coherent narrative which is able to communicate the intended motive(s). I use this proposition to evaluate Ngugi's commitment and fidelity to the genre of autobiography by examining the two texts in terms of achieving their intentions and motives.

Norman Denzin develops autobiographical criticism by emphasising on autobiographical artistry. He argues that when studying the autobiographical form, various aspects of art must be considered. Denzin identifies the journey motif, transcendence and family origin as some of the aspects that come into play when critiquing the fidelity of an autobiographical text to the genre of autobiography. The journey motif refers to the movements and development over time that the

writer of the autobiography goes through; transcendence brings in the idea that such a writer can go beyond his/her lifetime to summon and include historical experiences and happenings which might have had substantial impact on his/her life; and the aspect of family origin expects the writer to give an exposition on his family lineage. I pay close attention to Ngugi's handling of these aspects in the course of crafting and telling his childhood narrative in order to evaluate his artistry in handling them.

Jennifer Muchiri, while discussing artistry in autobiography, observes that when studying autobiography as a literary form, aspects of art such as story, themes, the narrative voice, plot, characters, and the setting should be considered. Muchiri further builds on this by observing that literary writers select their narrators deliberately depending on what and how the writers wish to communicate their messages and motives to the readers. Indeed, this is central to my study as I engage in an analysis of Ngugi's treatment of his story, the issues he tackles, the narrative voice(s) he employs, the plot of his narrative and the setting of his story in order to create his life narrative as a whole.

It is important to note that the readers' response to characters is highly influenced by the point of view selected by the author. Indeed, it is through the point of view that other aspects of art work together to create cohesion and to convey meaning. Autobiography employs the first person narrative voice where writers tell their stories in their own voices. This kind of narrator is the principal character, and s/he tells the story both as a participant in and an observer of the story. Muchiri's observations are useful in understanding this important aspect of artistry. It is therefore

critical to go further and examine how the narrative voice used by Ngugi in the two texts enable the realisation of his life story as a coherent narrative.

Most autobiographers present their plots in the form of a journey to show the steps they have taken to be where they are in the present. Muchiri argues that whichever way an autobiographer takes, “what is important is the unity of the text for this is what makes a complete whole” (36). The theory of autobiography is useful in this study as it assists me to examine how Ngugi wa Thiong’o crafts his narratives in the two autobiographical texts under study. This crafting of the narratives is made possible and unique by the way Ngugi employs autobiographical artistry – the main focus of my study. The examination of the use of artistry makes possible an inquiry into the nature and function of autobiography, particularly as explicated in the two texts.

1.8 Methodology

This study has been conducted through a comprehensive close reading of *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir* and *In the House of the Interpreter* with the aim of identifying and examining various aspects of artistry in the two texts. I explore the aspects of artistry to demonstrate how the events are sequenced in the story, how the causes and effects of the events are patterned in the plot, how the participants in the story – the characters – influence the protagonist – the principal character – and the effect of the narrative voice in the two texts. This study is concerned with how Ngugi the autobiographer artistically crafts his story to reinvent and re-present himself in the narratives.

Moreover, I engage in critical reading of various secondary texts on the genre of autobiography and on Ngugi's writings, especially his self-writing. I thus draw from the arguments of other critics who have undertaken studies on this mode of writing. My study is also premised on an analysis and evaluation of the extent to which Ngugi travels the path so theorised along the arguments by the scholars of autobiography I have referred to in the previous section. My study involves an exploration of the level of artistry employed by Ngugi and how that contributes to the autobiographical nature of the two texts under study.

1.9 Scope and Limitations

This study focuses on Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir* and *In the House of the Interpreter*. It examines artistry and how it is reflected in the texts as a strategy for conveying the author's concerns. The study is concerned with the story, the plot, the characters, the narrative voice in the two narratives to explore how the autobiographer crafts his story. It limits itself to close reading of the two primary texts.

CHAPTER TWO

THE NATURE OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Introduction

The present chapter discusses the nature of autobiography. It defines the term “autobiography” then examines the essential characteristics of an autobiography that distinctly make it a genre of literature. Further it explores the functions and motives of autobiography. It lays a foundation for the study.

An autobiography is a work of creative imagination that gives an account of the author’s life covering a specific period of time. There are various definitions of the term by different scholars of the genre which are closer to the above meaning. There seems to be certain aspects of the genre which appear to be uniform according to scholars. These underlying aspects inform my understanding and interpretation of the term “autobiography.” Pascal defines an autobiography as “a review of a life from a particular moment in time by the author.” He adds that an autobiography is the “shaping of the past to construct out of it a coherent story” (9).

Similar ideas are salient in Muchiri’s understanding of the term when she observes that an autobiography may be taken to mean “an account of an individual life, written by the subject and must be composed by the subject” (28). Denzin defines autobiography as “a first personal account of a set of life experiences” (34). From these definitions it is possible to pick out a number of constant ideas that cut across the perspectives offered by the three scholars. It is evident that the understanding of the term “autobiography” encompasses the idea of self-

reflection, self-assessment, and self-writing. I can therefore argue that it revolves around the life story by the self.

As part of the essential characteristics of autobiography it is important to note that autobiography and fiction as works of art have similarities and differences. Writers of both autobiography and fiction have points of view, story, and a narrative. E. M. Foster in *Aspects of the Novel* defines plot as “a narrative of events in which the time sequence is preserved but the sense of causality overshadows it” (88). On the same note Aristotle in *Poetics* defines plot as “the combination of the incidents or things done in the story” (31). He further argues that what really gives a work of art its universal appeal is the result of the poet as the maker of plots. From these definitions both autobiography and fiction have aspects of plot.

Muchiri argues that “a story’s plot, the arrangement of events that highlight causality, is what holds readers’ attention to the narrative as they keep reading to find out why the events occur” (36). The writer of autobiography patterns events so as to create unity in the narrative which leads to not only cohesion but also enhances the credibility of the narrative. Plot also gives the autobiography its aesthetic appeal. In this case arrangement and choice of what to include and where to place it in the narrative is for an intended purpose- to appeal to the reader. Plot answers the question “why?”

Foster differentiates plot from story by stating that “the story is a narrative of events arranged in their time-sequences” (87). Muchiri elaborates it by saying that “in a story, all the actions, incidents, speeches, thoughts, and observations are linked together to make up an organic unity,

the essence of which is the development of causes and effects” (36). From these observations it means a story answers the question “what?”

Autobiography and fiction employ points of view. In autobiography the point of view is always one- the first person pronoun while a fictional writer can use third person, omniscient, or first person narrative voice. The point of view used by the writer is essential in autobiographical work because its consistency shows authenticity in the narrative and reveals the subjective truth. The unique truth of life as it is seen and understood by the writer as an individual. They are the writers’ own interpretation of the experiences as they narrate the events. The narrative voice is an important aspect to be considered in Autobiographical writing. It is the voice that writers adopt for their stories to deliver the story to the readers.

There are major assumptions underlying the use of narrative voice in autobiography. As mentioned earlier writers select the first person pronoun as their narrator. The selection allows the narrators to tell their story in their own voice. Muchiri calls this narrator “the principal character in a narrative” (35). William Zinsser writing about the benefits of using the first person narrative voice in self-writing urges autobiographers to use “I”, “me”, “we”, and “us” because this perspective portrays how an autobiography is an intimate transaction between the reader and the writer and should retain its humanity (20).

Linda Anderson in *Autobiography* observes that, “the first person point of view allows the writer to own and control the narrative so that readers get to know only what the writer tells them” (70). In this respect this narrative voice may be limited by the fact that the eye-witness can only know

one's own mind and cannot see or feel everything. To counter such limitations the writer employs dialogue, reported speech, and in some instances the "I" achieves omniscient status in its ability to read what goes on in other characters' minds.

Writers of fiction on one hand deal with experiences and events that have never been. The experiences are all created by the writers. The autobiographers on the other hand write about what has occurred. Muchiri posits that the experiences cannot be predated. Autobiography involves certain conventions distinct to the study of human experience. It is the method by which real appearances and real people are created. The real people are the characters whom we may have met in life. The writers sometimes change the names of some characters for the characters' privacy where what is said about them is embarrassing.

The writers of autobiography use possessive words like "My" in their works and in the titles of their works distancing the autobiographies from fiction. John Kiriamiti's *My Life in Crime* and Esther Owuor's *My Life as a Paraplegic*, by this very intention and action dispense with the notion of fiction from their works. Among other things Denzin argues that "family beginnings, turning point experiences, and truthful experiences distinguish autobiography from fiction" (17).

From Denzin's argument I can then make an observation that the autobiographers do not narrate every experience in their lives but they select and then order these experiences depending on how the experiences are meaningful and significant in the writers' lives. When writing about the nature of autobiography, Abbs says that "the authors deliberately select what to include in their autobiography" (8). Muchiri develops this argument by making an observation that selection is

determined by the motive of the autobiography. From these arguments, I then conclude that selection is an important feature of the autobiography that allows the writers to order, structure, and organise their narratives in such a way that credibility and organic unity is evident in their works.

Closely related to this is that the writers of autobiography aim at communicating truth about themselves. Muchiri discusses the truths in levels: the autobiographical truth which Smith and Watson in *Reading Autobiography* define as “an intersubjective exchange between narrator and reader aimed at producing a shared understanding of the meaning of life” (13). It shows how sincere the writers are in narrating their story. Second, there exists historical truth that can be verified through existing documents. Last, the fictional truth is important in conveying the truth in a life narrative. It shows how the writers craft their story and it is based on the writers’ artistry.

Artistry in autobiography means a writer’s deliberate yet creative endeavours through which the writers reveal to us the story of their lives. Muchiri defines artistry in autobiography as the deliberate aesthetic craft that the autobiographers employ when telling their story. She goes further to argue that what constitutes the basis of artistry is the writer’s effort to recreate past events and put them in narrative form (38). Through the use of the aspects of autobiographical artistry (point of view, characters, plot, setting, story), writers craft their narratives as they avoid conscious fictionalising which is only evident in fiction writing. By avoiding fictionalising their narratives consciously they re-enact and recreate their experiences so that they engage in imagination and creativity.

The creative techniques employed by the writers of autobiography may be revealed in a number of ways. Through depiction of themselves in the narrative or how the writers talk about other characters around them. The depiction constitutes artistic technique that enables the telling of the story so that in the end there is an autobiographical account of the writer. The writers are the principal characters in autobiography and all the other characters only exist insofar as they affect the principal character in terms of the development of the main character's growth. Muchiri notes, "Writers depict their characters in different ways: what other characters say about them; what the characters do; what the writers say about them while speaking as a participant or observer" (37). In relation to this, the principal character is also the protagonist in an autobiography such that the other characters are people who interact with the protagonists in the course of their lives as they highlight the stages in the life of the protagonists.

To communicate the autobiographical truth the writers endeavour to show consistency in the depiction of character and the narrative voice which results into a cohesive narrative. They also cultivate truth in their autobiographies through holding the narrative together organically. The courage and the risk that the writers take to talk about themselves contribute to the autobiographical truth in their narratives. It takes courage and risk to talk about oneself especially on private issues. Autobiography as Muchiri posits, "Opens the author's life to the public" (28). This kind of exposure requires courage and ability to withstand public scrutiny. For writers to deliberately select experiences and allow us to share in them requires courage. Writing about themselves with candour and committing the narratives to the public is a form of confiding in us and this engenders of empathy and understanding.

Truth can also be communicated in the way the writer depicts his various stages of growth as the narrative moves from one point of life to the other. Sequencing of events from one experience to the other in a way that the narrative is held together brings cohesion as has been discussed in the selection of the writer's experiences. This arrangement of events shows autobiographical truth and brings credibility in the writer's narrative.

Writers of autobiography further contribute to the autobiographical truth if they provide paratexts such as photographs, letters, dates, diary entries, prefaces and dedications to corroborate their claims. In *Semiotics for Beginners* Chandler observes that various elements of the body of an autobiography are supported by other paratexts which bring out meaning, coherence and offer autobiographical truth (9). Muchiri, discussing autobiographical truth observes that these paratextual elements assist in communicating truth. She adds that these elements authenticate some of the claims that writers make about their experiences. In *Long Walk to Freedom* Mandela provides photographs of various stages of his growth to validate the events he narrates. Ken Wiwa in *In the Shadow of a Saint* provides letters to authenticate some of the claims he makes about his life. The writers can also support these claims by vivid description of the characters and events.

Memory as a feature of autobiography is essential in depicting truth. Muchiri observes that, "autobiographers may easily remember and narrate about certain achievements in their lives and conveniently forget painful events" (29). The silences as mentioned earlier can sometimes help the reader in establishing autobiographical truth in the works of the writer which reveals credibility in the narrative. The individual's decision not to reveal certain aspects of their life

may or may not damage the true value of autobiography. Pascal posits that we have to “accommodate the scenario because there is on one hand the truth of fact and on the other the truth of the writer’s feelings that we have to put into consideration” (67). The omissions and silences can only be judged in relation to personality and autobiographical intentions involved.

Abbs in *Autobiography in Education* advises that, “when we detect a nervous evasiveness, an unwillingness to step into dangerous territory, we should not force things but accept and respect this” (9). This unwillingness of the writers is so because they are unable at sometimes to give attention to something until they experience an “I can” with regard to the particular experience. Memory, Pascal says for its own reason chooses where to go and where it is not ready to go, meaning in effect that the writers of autobiography will be happy to recreate those memories which they are ready to take some stand towards. Memory is also important in writing autobiography for in the absence of it the writer has nothing to recollect. Writers have to dialogue with themselves to reconstruct and to mediate a present identity from the memories that emerge.

Memory is not entirely a private activity but can be a collective activity to a certain degree. Muchiri argues that, “various communities of memory such as religion, racial, ethnic, and familial develop their own occasions, practices and rituals of remembering which aid in preserving and passing on memories” (29). In this case sources of memory may be personal, for example from family stories and photographs. The sources can also be public, for example from documents and historical events.

History influences memory, such that how people remember and who does the remembering are historically specific. The incidents that the writer narrates show how a particular moment aids a writer in the process of remembering. The senses of touch, smell, sight, and sound evoke memory and convey it in objects or events with particular meaning for the autobiographer. For example, people who suffer from trauma keep remembering bits and fragments of their past when an object or a smell triggers the memory. Muchiri observes that the process of remembering is not passive but the person who does the remembering has to recreate meaning from remembering (29). In other words the writers have to interpret what they have remembered in order to reconstruct their own sense of identity.

The idea of remembering is discussed by Ngugi in *Re-membering Africa* when he writes about fragmentation and restoration of Africa. He argues that “it is the colonialists who are responsible for Africa’s loss of cultural identity. He further says that the natives’ memory is dismembered from their individual and collective body” (4). In this case the autobiographers’ attempt to remember the fragments of their dismembered experiences to acquire some wholeness is evident in most African autobiographies such as Camara Laye’s *The African Child* and Eskia Mphahlele’s *Down Second Avenue*. Through reflection into their past writers are able to remember then re-member (put together) the experiences that relate to their lives. By ordering such experiences the writers’ narratives become credible.

Another important feature of autobiography related to memory is experience. Through retrospection and introspection- the act of revisiting the past and examining one’s life from within respectively, writers recall their experiences. These experiences as mentioned earlier are

significant to the writers and the recalled events have a bearing on what the writers see as their (writers) formative years. Through retrospection, the writers of autobiography rely on the past events to locate themselves at a specific place and time. In this respect Abbs writing about the nature of autobiography quotes Rousseau who declares in his *Confessions*: “To know me in my advanced years you must have known me well in my youth” (7). Through such experiences the readers are able to point the narrator’s character which is revealed through the role the narrator plays in the course of those past events.

The experience that writers engage with is authoritative in the sense that it is the writers’ experiences that persuade the reader of the authenticity of the narrative; it validates certain claims in the narrative as truthful, and it justifies the writing and publicising of the life story. Muchiri argues that narrators claim the authority of experience both explicitly and implicitly. She explains that the explicit claims can be as humble as the appearance of the autobiographer’s name on the cover page (30). The name on the cover page announces the credibility of the story. For example Nelson Mandela in *Long Walk to Freedom* and Wangari Maathai in *Unbowed*.

The author’s name is like an autobiographical signature that seals the contract between the reader and the writer. The explicit authority of experience is used by writers who are not a public figure. Such narratives may be based on religious, sexual, ethnic or national identity claims so that the explicit narration gives voice to the voiceless in the society. For example Kiriamiti indicates his experience as a criminal in the title of *My Life in Crime*. Therefore the autobiography tells the personal story of the writer and draws its content from the writer’s experiences over time.

The experiences take the form of a journey motif in the life of the narrator. The journeys are physical, mental and psychological in nature. The physical journeys in the life of the narrator take two levels. First the narrator makes a movement in terms of physical growth from childhood to adulthood. Second the narrators move from one area to another with different experiences that mark their stage of growth depending on a particular place. The narrators make the mental journey from innocence to experience. The journey begins when the narrators are ignorant about the happenings around them but the journey comes to an end when the narrators have acquired knowledge. It is this knowledge that is crucial in the narrators' adult life in comprehending and interpreting childhood experiences that were beyond their understanding as children. The psychological journeys aid the narrators in understanding themselves emotionally. Therefore the journey motif is an important component of narrating experiences by the narrators because through the journeys the narrators reveal important turning points through their stages of growth. The journeys are also part of what moulds the writers into what they become at the end of their narratives.

Related to the journey motif is the transcendental structure of autobiography. Autobiographers write their narratives mostly as adults who are able to look back in time and make judgements on themselves and others depending on how the writers have led their lives. The transcendental nature of autobiography moves with fluctuations in history and goes beyond the writers' time and space when the experiences occurred. Rasnah Warah in *Triple Heritage* begins her narrative by giving an account of the time when the first group of Asians arrived in Kenya, a time before she was born.

Last, writers of autobiography narrate their life experiences as if they were speaking to an audience which lends the autobiography the nature of oral testimony. The experiences of the writers appear as testimony to the historical time in which they live. The autobiography however is different from history because it uses personal details. The historians are observers to the experiences they write about while autobiographers are both observers and participants in the events they narrate. In other words the autobiographers are right in the middle of the occurrences. In relation to this, autobiographers are representatives of their period because the autobiography reflects the historical period in which the autobiographers lives or writes.

To illustrate the above idea, George Misch in *A History of Autobiography and Antiquity* notes that although autobiographies are fundamentally personal narratives they are bound always to be representative of their period within a range that will vary with the intensity of the writer's participation in present life and within the sphere in which they moved. In this regard their narratives capture experiences that affect other people's lives. The writers only do this insofar as these events relate to their experiences.

The autobiography usually results from a combination of different motives. In her discussion of the motives of autobiography, Muchiri observes that, "it is possible to establish the key motive in an autobiography" (44). The motive also forms the type of autobiography. Balch argues, "To confess is the desire of many but it is within the power of a few" (8). Usually after saying what overburdens one's heart, one experiences a state of calm. Most of the crime autobiographies are for confession. For example Saga McOdongo in *Deadly Money Maker* narrates her life as a criminal and what led to her imprisonment and eventual transformation.

Some autobiographies are written from an inner necessity. The weight of experience can be a burden that cannot be borne until it is composed in the autobiography. Sometimes it is not a burden of guilt but a burden of memories and experience. Pascal quotes Yeats from the *Reveries* where Yeats says he is haunted by memories and he needs to find “somebody to talk to about them” (60). This indicates that it is not so much to tell others about our self as to come to terms with our self but to grasp our self as a whole.

Another motive of writing autobiography especially by Africans is the desire to preserve a social structure. Close to this is the nature of the continent’s history of colonization and postcolonial experience that disrupt and undermine African culture. In Wole Soyinka’s *Ake: The Years of Childhood*, Nelson Mandela’s *Long Walk to Freedom*, and Ngugi wa Thiongo’s *Detained: A Writer’s Prison Diary* as some of the exemplary African autobiographies, it is evident that the writers attempt to go back to history to define their identity. Those who write in full trauma due to the oppression feel healed but it is more of a collective memory for it captures a whole people’s experience. It is in connection with this that Indangasi argues that “African... autobiographers perceive themselves as representatives of an oppressed and despised racial group and seek to challenge those who are responsible for this state of affair” (115).

Autobiographies are a search for an inner standing and discovery in a world occupied by many other people. As the writers narrate their story, they are able to get a meeting place between themselves and the outer world. Muchiri in developing this function of autobiography observes that, “the autobiography provides us with a representative of the character of life altogether, and

its style is not invented by the imagination, but chosen and arranged by the autobiographer through memory” (45).

Some writers of autobiography embark on writing their narratives because they believe their lives are worth sharing with others. Examples of such autobiographies include Wangari Maathai’s *Unbowed* and Yusuf Dawood’s *Nothing but the Truth*. The autobiographers would like to tell their readers about the challenges they have gone through but in the end they have triumphed. The writers prove that no incident is too minor or insignificant to be woven into the autobiography because all experiences shape who individuals we are and who they become. Such autobiographies are both transformational and motivational both to the readers and the writers.

Muchiri, writing about functions of autobiography, argues that “writers of autobiography bring to light connections between the individual and the society...these connections are important aspects of the autobiography because the writer uses their personal narratives to come to terms with their personal experiences” (45). It helps them justify their own perceptions about the events around them. Warah’s *Triple Heritage* examines the culture of the Asian community living in Kenya.

The narratives by the autobiographers could be therapeutic both to the writer and the reader. Since the readers of such autobiographies may sometimes identify with the painful experiences, these stories become therapeutic to the readers too. As discussed earlier the recall of the painful by the writer also creates empathy in the reader for the writer. It is through writing about trauma that the narrators find words to give voice to that which they could not express previously.

Autobiographies reflect writer's pursuit for voice, the desire to be heard. The narrative allows the writers to define themselves as individuals, distinct from those images fostered by society or by cultural stereotypes. Through this life story they are able to tell their readers that "this is who I am." Through the mode of autobiography the writers examine the difficult memories, thoughts, feelings and social concerns. Through the narratives they come to terms with the experiences. Since readers of such experiences may identify with the stories and the writer's painful experiences, the writer's acts of remembering often have a therapeutic effect on us as readers. It also elicits empathy from us for this gives us an opportunity to look back and relate to our own experiences. In addition, readers who may not have experienced such pains are able to empathize with those who suffered by identifying with their suffering imaginatively.

Autobiography can be read as a historical document because it is intertwined with history. It can offer evidence of historical periods but it does not give prominence to historical facts, the prominence is in the self. The historical evidences are related to the narrator's life. These historical evidences offer the subjective truth, that is, truth as experienced by the writer. The autobiographies of Mphahlele and Mandela, *Down Second Avenue* and *Long Walk to Freedom*, respectively for example, offer different accounts of South Africa's apartheid history because each of the writers narrates the events as he experienced them. Their autobiographies though about the same subject and place, present each individual's opinion.

Autobiographies can serve the function of inscription of the self; the writers leaving their mark in the world. Denzin argues that "the autobiographer seeks, through printed words' to make a public statement that will survive him or her at a life's end" (77). Balch adds "that people will

not let their memory die or their name be blotted out if they can prevent it” (22). As pertains to the inscription of the self, writers leave their mark through the different identities they acquire through the journeys they make in life through telling their stories. At one point they could be in school where they are students remembered because of what they do. At other times they are brothers or sisters who make a mark on their siblings. Yet they could also be prisoners who have inscribed themselves in the prison cells. The different experiences shape the life of the writers and touches on the people they interact with.

Pascal argues that, “Good autobiography represents a new stage in self-knowledge and a new formulation of responsibility towards the self; it involves a mental exploration and change of attitude” (183). Abbs adds that “autobiography is the search backwards into time to discover the evolution of the true self” (7). In this sense, autobiographies are not only an account of things experienced, but a search for the true self and a means to come to terms with it. At the end of the autobiography the writer should have a new attitude towards his life. Through their narratives the writers reconstruct and reshape their past. Therefore an autobiography is an instrument for understanding life.

An autobiography reconstructs and reshapes a writer’s past and project lessons, morals, and ideals for the present and the future. Abbs in augmenting this argument states that “autobiography is an attempt to answer the following conscious or half conscious questions: Who am I? How have I become who I am? What may I become in future?” He further says “autobiography as an act of writing, perches in the present, gazing backwards into the past while poised ready for flight into the future” (7). Most writers finish their autobiographies with

submerged concern with the immediate future boldly surfacing. Abbs adds that the central concern of autobiography is to describe, evoke, and generally recreate the development of the author's experience. Indeed autobiography through intense recreation of the author's past reveals a deeper power: The power to look at oneself as an individual.

Conclusion

This chapter has defined the autobiography through varied scholars. From the argument it is basically a work of self-writing. It involves creative imagination that gives an account of the author's life covering a specific period of time. It has also examined the essential characteristics of the autobiography. The chapter has discovered that there are distinct elements that strictly separate autobiography from fictional works generally in terms of autobiographical truth and the fictional truth. Further it has discussed the motives and functions of autobiography. Autobiographers have various intentions of writing their life narratives. It has discovered that autobiographers employ certain strategies to create cohesion in their work. Central to these are the narrative voice, patterning and organising events, consistency in the depiction of character, and the use of first person pronoun as the narrative voice.

From this then, I can conclude that autobiographical writing is not only artistic but it also has its own defining characteristics and parameters. Throughout this discussion the story, the plot, the characters, and the point of view are essential aspects of artistry that take the centre stage. They shall be discussed in the next chapters, each in detail to show how Ngugi shows his craftsmanship in *Dreams in a Time of War: A childhood Memoir* and *In the House of the Interpreter*.

CHAPTER THREE

ARTISTRY IN *DREAMS IN A TIME OF WAR*

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I seek to examine artistry in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Dreams in a Time of War*. I identify the unique markers of artistry that set apart *Dreams in a Time of War* as an autobiographical text. I focus on aspects of artistry in the autobiographical form and how they are portrayed in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Dreams in a Time of war*. In this case I consider the aspects in four parts. First, the story, second, the plot, third, the characters, under this I discuss the personalities and non personalities that influence Ngugi's development. The non personalities in this case are the Second world War, the Mau Mau Uprising and Ngugi's family. Last, I discuss the narrative voice. I discuss the strategies the writer employs to create empathy in the reader and how he creates credibility in his narrative under the aspects. It is along these aspects that I examine the extent to which Ngugi's weaving of *Dreams in a Time of War* makes the narrative an interesting autobiographical work.

3.2 The Narrative

Ngugi narrates his life story in a way that immerses the reader into walking with him through definitive steps in his childhood. He divides the narrative into sections that do not count so much as the narrative resembles a stream of oral narration with its typical features such as remembering then re-remembering to form an organic whole. Right from the title of the narrative he employs suspense to whet the readers' appetite. He leaves the readers asking themselves about which dreams and what war he is referring to. Suspense plays an important role in a story

for it grabs the attention of the reader. He heightens the drama in the narrative through the event that happens on their way home from school. Ngugi listens to the conversations about a man who was to be shot by the British soldiers without the slightest idea that the man is his brother. He hides this identity from the readers until he finally reaches home.

However, it is Ngugi's journey from home to Alliance High School that carries with it the most suspense. Here is a young boy with great expectations of boarding a train that he has always dreamed of. He calls it a special train. He cannot realise his dream because he does not have a pass that allows him to move from Limuru to Kikuyu. The country is under a new law- the state of emergency. The train leaves without him. He says, "I stand there on the platform with my luggage and watch the train move away with my dreams but without me, with my future but without me, till it disappears" (157). The reader is left wondering if Ngugi would go to school. A resolution eventually comes in the form of a goods train which he boards to school. Whatever the condition of the mode of travel that he uses this part of the episode unifies the whole narrative and portrays the identity of Ngugi at the moment as one at peace with himself after the misfortunes that have disturbed his life.

He returns to the past in his story and uses a retrospective explanation of what is remembered that sometimes bring extensive diversions from the main line of the story. In them he leaves a concrete situation for a more general reflection. When talking about his encounter with Ngandi, he goes ahead to narrate two stories that he read from a book Ngandi gave him. He gives a general reflection from one of the stories that one could write about the common place and still make it interesting. This reveals how *Dreams in a Time of war: A Childhood Memoir* is like an

oral narrative, a feature common in autobiographies. He tells his story from the age of one year to about sixteen years, covering his life before and during primary school. The story runs from 1939 to 1955 at the height of Mau Mau Uprising in the country, an event which plays a significant role in defining the character and personality of Ngugi. He begins his story by saying that he was born in 1939 to Thiong'o wa Nducu and Wanjiku wa Ngugi.

He informs us that his mother was the third of his father's four wives and that they were twenty-four children. He says he was the fifth child in his mother's house. He remembers what his mother told him about the circumstances that led to both parents marrying each other. As Ngugi narrates the incident we are able to grasp some character traits of his mother. Ngugi observes:

My mother would not answer follow-up questions, but what she had said was enough to tell me how she came to lose her place, as the youngest and latest to Njeri, the fourth wife, or even how she felt about the new addition to the family.

(15)

The narrative moves to the relationship in the larger family and Ngugi tells this in a manner that shows how significant the experiences with the family members made a mark in his life. He narrates the family evenings of storytelling and tells of the skills that he acquires from here as a young boy. These skills prepare him for his adult life as a writer. Through his narration we learn about his joining Kamandura Primary School and how he had to walk six miles to school and stay hungry the whole day till later in the evening. As he crafts this story there is a way that the

reader empathises with him for walking the long distance and staying on an empty stomach the whole day.

He remembers vividly how he missed a performance he had prepared for. He later recalls how this incident affected him and later when his elder brother and his mother decide at the end of 1948 that he had to join a new school, he was heartbroken. This shows that the meaning that Ngugi attaches to this event is significant to his life and sharing his low moments with the reader is therapeutic to him.

Ngugi's narrative to the readers' especially embarrassing situations and the private details involving certain painful experiences shows his courage to tell his story. The readers who identify with such experiences are relieved and this also elicits empathy from the readers. The event that Ngugi talks about at the beginning of the narrative is crafted in a way that it creates empathy in the reader towards families that suffer in the hands of the British soldiers. Ngugi uses illustrations and details to describe scenes. Some of these descriptions produce a tense effect that point out the tension that accompany the situation. When he comes home after his brother's escape Ngugi writes:

Home at last, my mother, Wanjiku, and my younger brother Njinju, my sister Njoki, and my elder brother's wife, Charity. They were huddled together around the fireside... Food was ready all right, handed to me in a calabash bowl, in total silence. Even my younger brother who liked to call out my failings such as coming home after dusk, was quiet. (4)

His struggle with education amidst other challenges such as lack of food, and insufficient lighting to aid his studying at home leaves the reader empathising with Ngugi. He says he is devastated when the sun sets because it marks the end of light till the following day. This indeed is a pathetic situation for a child with dreams in education. The act of climbing a tree to read to take away his mind from food during lunch breaks at school is sad.

When he narrates his expulsion from home by his father, Ngugi distances himself from this experience for it is painful to come to terms with it. Ngugi's half brother who is deaf is shot by the British soldiers during one of their raids. This sad incident pains Ngugi's family that they do not talk about it. However, the autobiography gives Ngugi a platform to talk about it which is a therapy to himself and even to families who have lost their loved ones through such tragic situations. All these experiences create empathy in the readers.

The manner in which Ngugi goes round an incident that happens between him and his young brother Njinju during a sports day reveals a guilty tone in him. However this event gives space for him to introspectively question himself and come up with his ideals to leave on. The incident happens when he disowns his younger brother who according to Ngugi is a great embarrassment because of his dressing. He lives with this guilt and he says this thought, in later tribulations, always helped him to endure and overcome challenges. He observes:

The problem, I came to realise, was not in my brother or the other boys but in me.

I had lost touch with who I was and where I came from. Belief in yourself is more

important than endless worries of what others think of you. Validation is best that comes from within. (45)

Later Ngugi tells of his encounter with the Old Testament which he calls the book of magic and how some acts and scenes in the Bible looked like magic within magic. His interest in reading does not stop here but he is further seen reading other writers and eventually he becomes a lover of books. His habit of reading becomes an advantage when he faces a challenging examination.

The story portrays Ngugi in the middle of a crisis between Christianity and tradition. He narrates about his father's love for western life and his uncle who embraces Agikuyu way of life and how he is caught in between. Ngugi says how the performance aspects of both Christianity and tradition always appealed to him. In this case there he draws from the two worlds. Later at Manguo School he tends to be fond of the Sunday services at the African schools. For the reader to understand this, Ngugi employs a vivid description of the performances during the Sunday Services at the school.

As the story progresses, Ngugi goes from the very personal, intimate tone of the preschool age, captured in details of everyday life, to a more condensed style when depicting the later years, in which the public seems to have, to a certain extent, overshadowed the private. He focuses on the history of the country especially the mission schools and the African Independent schools. Through this story we learn about the formation of the Kenya Teachers' College at Githunguri which was an African initiative committed to producing teachers who would provide African children with unbiased knowledge. Ngugi goes ahead to concentrate on the lives of other

personalities in Kenyan history like Waiyaki who was buried alive for his resistance to the colonial rule.

The story gradually moves from public to private again and focuses on Ngugi's last days before he joins Alliance High School. Ngugi tells of the problem of tuition that the mother cannot afford but ironically the person who comes to his aid is Njairu, a government-appointed headman. The irony of this situation elevates his position and he manages to get the money. This man mobilises the other family members to contribute towards Ngugi's school fees.

The narrative slowly closes with the dramatic experience just before he travels to school. Ngugi narrates how he misses the train because he does not have a pass that allows him to move from Limuru to Kikuyu. He recalls his mother in one single sentence as the central figure in his childhood. He says:

I stand there on the platform with my luggage and watch the train move away with my dreams but without me, with my future but without me, till it disappears. I shed tears. I don't want to, I am a man I am not supposed to cry, but I cannot help it...I don't know how my mother will receive this, for mine was also her dream. (157)

Ngugi is leaving the family circle to a wider world and he is a different child from the little boy watching grownups moving about at the beginning of the story. He is mature and knowledgeable

from the experiences he has gone through. He is a determined, confident, and forgiving teenager at the end of the story.

As he narrates the experiences Ngugi employs para-textual elements which corroborate his narrative mode. Ngugi has used photographs in the narrative for varied effects. His mother's photograph stands out among the rest and it has been set apart from the others. It appears at the beginning of the narrative. Placing it here means Ngugi has a soft spot for his mother and he is telling the readers that he is what he is because of his mother.

The other photographs appear in the middle of the text. The first photograph among them shows a section of students of Manguo Primary School then the teachers of the school, Ngugi provides the names of the students and teachers in the photographs which gives more information about the school. Seeing Ngugi barefoot authenticates his narrative form when he says that he had never worn shoes before. There is a photograph of his brother Mwangi just before he ran to the mountains and another one of a British boy pointing a gun at an African child. This one about the boys shows how brutal the government of the day was that even a small child could point a gun at an African child. These photographs play a major and significant role in furthering the self narrative and places it in context.

Important in communicating meaning and showing authenticity are autobiographical claims such as dates of birth as well as dates of important events. In his narrative Ngugi has the dates when most historical events occurred in Kenya including the end of the Second World War. He gives the year when he joins school. His dedication note at the beginning of the autobiography can be

tied to his mother's photograph and that of Good Wallace, his brother, for they convey almost the same meaning. Ngugi is telling the reader how the two are significant in his life. Both play important roles in shaping his dreams. Ngugi's decision to narrate the story of his life to the public is an act of courage and this offers credibility to his narrative which results into autobiographical truth. Those embarrassing and private moments in his private life proves that he gives the readers his trust by narrating his story with candour.

3.3 Episodal Patterning

In keeping with the purpose of the study, this section discusses the plot to examine Ngugi's arrangement of the events that constitute the narrative. Ngugi starts the narrative with an episode that happened when he was fifteen years of age. He recalls what had happened back in 1954 when his brother Mwangi escaped the arrest narrowly by the British soldiers. It also shows how his brother's escape had an impact on his life. So by positioning this event at the beginning of the narrative, Ngugi reveals not only an act of looking back at a given present but he also lays bare the preparatory nature of whatever happened as a signpost of the actions and experiences that finally culminate in the realisation of his dream, hence the closure of meaning.

Ngugi's choice to begin the narrative with the brother's escape to the mountains leads us into asking many questions about the incident. What has his brother done? Why does he escape? Will he come back? It sets the tone of the plot and every event that brings bad news to Ngugi revolves around his brother and the Mau Mau fighters. The event is set apart from the rest of the narrative and it is revisited to merge the episodes into one whole towards the end of the narrative. Ngugi succeeds in smoothly tying up the case that was opened at the beginning of the narrative.

In the next three chapters, he gives an overview of his family background. From this point the subsequent chapters that he recalls, selects, and presents are significant and meaningful insofar as his dream for education is concerned. The episode of a ride to King George Hospital in Reverend Kahahu's car, Ngugi's eyes getting cured at the hospital, his mother's disappointment and eventual struggle to get home after boarding a wrong bus from the hospital. All these he selects for their importance in indicating how his mother is significant in his life and how grateful he was to Reverend Kahahu.

From the events of 1954 in *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir*, the narrative goes back to 1938 to 1945, back to 1901 and then 1948 which brings together the events of different periods in order to show the coming of the European settlers and how Ngugi joined school for the first time. He narrates the building of the railway line, and then moves to the events which happen when he is a very young child. Through bringing together different events from different periods meaningfully, Ngugi succeeds in ordering the events he recalls for effect which is an important component of plot in an autobiography.

It is from the description of his father's homestead and the neighbouring homes that Ngugi tells how Kahahu took his father's land. Ngugi does this smoothly such that the issue of land connects with the initial description. It marks a seamless transition from one episode to the next through choice and arrangement of events. This connection shows Ngugi's skill in arranging the events to effectively bring cohesion.

The period Ngugi covers in the autobiography is about sixteen years though the narrative goes beyond this time to include events before Ngugi was born. It is such a long time and the events he narrates are also many yet Ngugi succeeds in artistically controlling them in order to craft a meaningful text. Through the strategy of ordering the events, he manages to portray his purpose of showing the challenges he goes through even as he struggles to achieve his dream. Ngugi tampers with the linearity of time of actual events to create an artistic narrative that is organic, which the actual occurrences cannot achieve. His re-ordering of the facts he recalls shows causality and their effects. This aesthetic appeal in the story through plot is what allows the readers to see the action which involves the rearrangement of the episodes of the events that Ngugi experiences which results in the cohesion seen in *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir*.

Ngugi seems to have attained the time to write about his life later when he has already achieved a lot through education which is his major dream as a protagonist in his narrative. The writing of one's life calls for looking back to discover what is significant in shaping of one's personality. Through retrospect, the art of looking back, Ngugi is able to present the episodes and the experiences which later result into his final entry in the Alliance High School at the end of the plot.

In *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir* Ngugi presents his plot through a journey motif to indicate the steps he has taken to be where he is at the end of the narrative. There are physical journeys as he grows from a boy to an adolescent who is ready to join a secondary school. He also makes physical journeys from home to school and later he makes a grand

journey when he achieves his dream and finally joins the Alliance High School. As he makes his journeys the nation of Kenya is also making a journey to independence; which means the war is a journey. He lets us know how important these journeys are because it is through the journeys that he realises his dreams.

The dream is very significant in Ngugi's autobiography. His wish to excel in education translates into a kind of "dream" for a better person. These dreams occupy his young mind even as the country is experiencing a difficult time during the struggle for independence. Ngugi derives the title of his narrative from the notion that a child can be hopeful in the midst of challenges, hence *Dreams in a Time of War*. It is through his dream that he expresses his genuine desire for education. He is able to meet the challenges of peasantry through the dreams and working hard. Through his narrative Ngugi shows the reader how a child is able to achieve his dream during a war. At the end of the narrative Ngugi suggests new dreams even in a time of war.

A dream to be free, not a prisoner of resentment or anger as a result of his last encounter with his father when he sends Ngugi and his brother away from the only place they called home. On this particular day his father inspires him: "You shall fall sometimes. The thing is to stand up and continue walking" (155). This is symbolic in the sense that it allows Ngugi to continue dreaming even in difficult times. Ngugi's dream allows him to let the reader into other dreams. As he dreams, there is also a dream at the national level. The people of Kenya as a nation are also dreaming of liberation from colonial rule.

Ngugi has used the dreams to show us the ideals he stands for by alluding to other men who have acquired honour through their love for human dignity. These are people who stood for ideals similar to his. He mentions W.E. B. Dubois, Marcus Garvey, Gandhi, Nehru, and closer home Mbiyu, Kimathi, and Kenyatta. These people had pursued the dream of justice and fairness during their times. Ngugi's constant mentioning of his mother shows that she was the source of his dream and also the one who shaped this dream among other people. It is to his mother that he attaches the most importance when it comes to dreams as we witness at the closure of the narrative when Ngugi leaves for the Alliance High School: "I hear my mother's voice: Is it the best you can do? I say to her with all my heart, Yes, Mother, because I also know what she really is asking for is my renewal of our pact to have dreams even in a time of war" (158).

The narrative moves forward and backward in the plot. This results into foreshadowing and flashbacks. Foreshadowing aids in giving hints in what we would expect and it also creates tension that promises resolution as we read on. While in primary school Ngugi the protagonist hints at his future academic excellence by presenting an incident in which he had caught the attention of his teacher by writing an essay. He says, "Though things would change in years to come, I did not stand out in any subject during my first year at Manguo, not even in sports or physical education" (76). Another forward reference is when Ngugi anticipates his friend's future success in business in Limuru. Ndungu drops out of school but because of his sharp mind and an active intelligence, he later becomes a land owner and a town councillor after independence.

Another forward reference that Ngugi uses as a strategy to keep the readers glued to the narrative is when he mentions his classmates that he can easily recall from memory. There is Njambi, the daughter of Reverend Kahahu, who later goes to the Alliance Girls High School then on to the USA, marries, and then dies tragically while giving birth. When talking about Kimathi's amazing feats as narrated to him by his friend Ngandi, Ngugi makes a forward reference by alluding to his novel *Weep Not, Child*. He says the dramatic way in which his friend narrated his stories left him wondering whether they were fact or fiction. He says later he gives Njoroge, the protagonist in the novel, a feeling of fact and rumour. This is interesting for he wonders if he captured the experiences in a country at war in the said novel. He says:

Years later, in my novel *Weep Not, Child* I would give to the young fictional Njoroge an aura of fact and rumour, certainty and doubt, despair and hope, but I am not sure if I was able truly to capture the intricate web of the mundane and the dramatic, surreal normality of ordinary living under extraordinary times in a country at war. (121)

Ngugi's use of forward referencing is a way of underscoring that he writes as an adult far removed from events of his childhood and as an adult with information of what happened after his childhood, information which transcends the autobiography.

Ngugi employs the use of flashbacks. Through Ngandi's eyes Ngugi is able to go beyond the times that he witnesses the events. The story of Ole Ngurueni, building of the railway line

Mbiyu's trip to America in 1929 are some of the events that happen before Ngugi is born and he presents this through his friend Ngandi.

In narrating the incident of his baptism, he refers back to the time when Reverend Kahahu's wife refuses to pay him along with the others for not producing those who stole her plums. He remembers this incident when Kenneth's mother insists that they cannot be Catholics and suggests that they go to Reverend Kahahu to baptise him and Kenneth. Through this flashback the reader is exposed to Ngugi's character of being a brave person who is able to stand up for his rights. Through flashback he recalls how his expectation of wearing shoes for the first time can only be compared to that other time long time ago when his mother bought him his first school uniform. His use of flashback technique is essential in patterning of the events because it makes the narrative dynamic and gives more tension to the narrative.

The plot in *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir* further moves to show the writer's later life when he is mature and has started developing skills as a writer from reading widely. He sits for Kenya African Preliminary Examinations in 1954. Just before the examination Ngugi presents a contrast in the narrative when his brother Mwangi, the Mau Mau guerrilla, comes to wish him good luck in the examination and his half brother, Kabae, who is a government soldier comes the same night for the same mission. Ngugi's use of this contrasting feature gives emphasis on the difference in situations that the two brothers are in which results into an irony. This incident is significant in Ngugi's life for it shows him how his education is important to his brother.

He moves from Kamandura, a mission school, to Manguo, an independent school. The writer shows a contrast between the two schools and we realise that at Manguo the teachers are not as strict as the ones at his former school. Ngugi emphasises the difference between a missionary school and an independent one. This contrast portrays a personality of Ngugi, that of one who is sceptical about Christianity. Generally at his new school he says there is a sense of community during worship. Ngugi connects this crossing over to the history of the country involving the British colonisers and the Africans. He writes, "I was crossing a great historic divide that had began way before I was born, and which, years later, I would still be trying to understand through my first novel, *The River Between*" (72).

Although Ngugi faces many challenges as he grows up, he does not present all his experiences on a sad tone. Sometimes he manages to coat them with humour. Ngugi portrays some of them by the humorous description he gives them. When narrating his father's change of behaviour after the loss of his wealth, Ngugi's account of Njeri, the youngest wife's treatment of his father is quite humorous. He recreates the experience in the following way:

The only woman he did not touch was Njeri. She was big-limbed, strong-bodied, and the story goes that once, when drunk, he tried to discipline her, but, with him inside the hut, she locked the door from inside to shut out eye witnesses and beat him while shouting, loudly enough for all the world to hear, that he was killing her. (58)

3.4 Personalities

The character traits that Ngugi portrays are as a result of the personalities who are the characters in *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir*. A number of personalities contribute to Ngugi's personal development. First, his mother, Wanjiku wa Ngugi, takes the centre stage in terms of the people who influence his life. Ngugi's mother as a pillar of his life is mentioned in many occasions in the narrative. Therefore even the photograph of Ngugi's mother at the beginning of the narrative evokes in the writer a strong sense of belonging and shows us how the writer's mother is an important personality in his life. He depicts his mother as "a thinker and a good listener loved for her generosity and respected for her legendary capacity for work" (17). Ngugi refers to his mother as the sole benefactor. In order, to give a true picture of the personality of his mother, Ngugi decides to use his father as a foil which is a strategy to show the values his mother possesses.

One event that portrays Ngugi's mother as a responsible and caring parent is during the days he suffers from an eye ailment. His mother takes him to traditional healers but there is no remedy. He later gets well when he was taken to a government hospital in Nairobi. Ngugi shows that it is through his mother's determination and hard work that he goes beyond the challenges to realise his dream of education.

Moreover, as he narrates his story his mother is shaping his dream. He shows us that his mother helped him see beyond the wars, beyond the family struggles, and challenges and focus on his dream by constantly asking him, "was this the best?" a question that pops up every time he presents his academic results to his mother. This question provides consistency in his mother's

character and hence a strategy for credibility in the narrative. The manner in which Ngugi describes his relationship with his mother is with a wonderful delicacy. For his mother Ngugi was her child who had to triumph against all odds.

Subsequently, Ngugi's mother comes out as someone who has an attitude of confronting challenges of life. When his father turns violent to the family as a result of his loss of property, his mother runs away and later when Ngugi and his brothers join her, she vows that Ngugi must continue with his schooling. She sells charcoal to provide tuition fee for her son. There is consistency in her determination for Ngugi to work hard in school. Ngugi shows this by stating the question his mother asks every time he brings his results home, "Is this the best?" This strategy aids in enhancing the credibility of the narrative as the readers look out for consistency in the autobiographical text. At the close of the narrative Ngugi revisits this question – "Is this the best you can do?" To some extent he expects his mother to continue asking him this question even in his new school. It also means that Ngugi is aware that his mother still expects him to dream through the challenges of war.

Second, Ngugi's elder brother, Wallace Mwangi, contributes to the shaping of Ngugi's life. Ngugi describes him as a person who is meticulous with everything including his workmanship in his carpentry workshop. Ngugi was interested in learning woodwork but his brother is very keen in his education. When Mwangi is with his friends and Ngugi happens to be in the vicinity, the elder brother would always want to show off his brother's education. Mwangi would insist that Ngugi reads a book to Mwangi's friends. He says this, "He liked it best when I was holding a book or a newspaper. Then he would draw attention of his friends to what I was doing" (94).

Later when Mwangi joins Mau Mau freedom fighters, he secretly comes home to wish Ngugi good luck in his examination. Ngugi says, “His risky visit motivated me to work hard” (138). This shows his expectations of Ngugi- to acquire education.

As noted earlier, Ngugi decides to begin his narrative by the escape of his brother Mwangi. It is his brother’s absence that continually deprives his family of sleep with constant interruptions at unexpected times by the British soldiers. Ngugi is worried about his brother in the mountains. His brother’s desire for his success in education is what fuels Ngugi’s hardworking spirit. He does not want to let his brother down. Indeed he succeeds in the end.

Third, is his primary school teacher, Mr. Samuel Kibicho. It is during Ngugi’s last two years at Manguo and Kinyongori that Mr. Samuel Kibicho makes a mark in his life. The teacher was a graduate from the Kagumo Teachers Training College. Ngugi gives this teacher a space in his narrative because of the influence he had in his life. Ngugi says that although most of the books they read in their English classes had settings in England, Mr. Kibicho would give examples that they were familiar with. To him it is through these examples that he was able to understand the content of the books. Ngugi further remembers that it is from the books from the teacher’s personal library that enable him develop a reading culture. We learn that there are other teachers in the school but Ngugi deliberately picks on this particular one because of the impact he made on his life- that of making him a lover of books. He says:

He made me understand the structure of the language and how to use simple and complex sentences or how to build a sentence of ever increasing complexity from

a simple one. From this simple to the complex: It was an outlook that remained imprinted in my mind. (135)

Fourth, his childhood friend, Kenneth Mbugua, is yet another person who is influential in Ngugi's life. The narrative shows the shared experiences that mould Ngugi into who he is. It is through Kenneth's curiosity about fact and fiction in a story told by different people that moulds the skill of listening in Ngugi. Kenneth's habit of inquiry when in doubt makes Ngugi a keen listener. The frequent arguments between Ngugi and Kenneth results into the former developing interest in writing. Indeed it is his friend who builds the courage in him to be a writer. Kenneth tells him, "one does not need a state license to write" (136).

Fifth, through oral testimony Ngugi is able to recall historical information from, the trained teacher, Ngandi Njuguna. It is through him that Ngugi learns about prominent people in Kenya like Mbiyu Koinange, Harry Thuku, and the issue of the Kenyan land grabbed by the British in 1902. The writer presents to us this personality as a strategy to cultivate credibility in the story. Most of the events that Ngandi narrates to him are not witnessed by Ngugi. Apart from being the source of historical information, Ngandi plays an important role in the life of the writer. It is through him that Ngugi learns the values of civility, responsibility, and mutual accountability. Another important aspect that he learns from the book Ngandi lends him, which helps him later in life is that, one could write about the common events and still make it interesting. So he acquired the art of writing stories from Ngandi.

Last, is Ngugi's father, Thiong'o wa Nducu, whom he introduces as a person who is fairly aloof and talked very little about his past. Through the death of his animals we are presented with a person who fears challenges and hides behind violence in the face of loss. Before this incident that leaves his father devastated, Ngugi speaks of him as a responsible man who knew how to run his family with order. He says this of his father:

The proud patriarch who would never have gone to someone else's house to drink liquor unless invited, the man who would have never drunk on a weekday, now started drinking all the time, and no longer brewing his own, going to other people's houses for *muratina*. (58)

When his father disowns him and chases him and his brother from home, Ngugi becomes bitter and this act from his father affects him seriously. He wonders how one's own father can afford to do such a cruel deed to his children. However, he does not harbour this bitterness against the father for a long time and later before he joins Alliance high School, Ngugi feels compelled to forgive his father for sending them away and he visits him in his compound. We learn that Ngugi is a forgiving person. He says:

But I am not here for money or gifts from him. I want to give myself a gift. I do not want to start a new life with resentment in my heart. My visit is my way of telling him that even though he has not asked for forgiveness, I will still forgive him. Like my mother, I believe that anger and hatred corrode the heart. (155)

3.5 Non Personalities

Ngugi's life can be understood within the context of the Second World War and the Mau Mau War. Members from his extended family fought in the Second World War. Through oral testimony from his friend, Ngandi, and what he witnesses, Ngugi gathers stories about the Second World War. He is told that his step brother, Kabae, who is finally back after the war, took part in the action. The war may be relevant to Ngugi's growth in a different way. Kabae's lifestyle and his ability to speak English attract Ngugi and fuel his dream for education. He says, "For us the Thiong'o family, he (Kabae) was by far the best educated. This may have sparked my desire for learning, which I kept to myself. Why should I voice desires impossible to fulfil" (27).

The Mau Mau War which was an uprising against the British colonial rule in the country has a great realisation in *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir*. Right from the beginning of the narrative the war is given a human face by Ngugi. He feels it is why his father loses his land. It is as a result of this war that his brother joins the Mau Mau fighters in the mountains just to fight for justice and freedom from the British colonisers. During the state of emergency, a historic period in the country, Ngugi, the young boy, suffers both psychologically and physically because he has to constantly worry about his brother's safety in the mountains. His brother's wife and his mother are suspended between fear and hope as a result of Mwangi's escape. Ngugi says, "the dreaded state of emergency had finally struck mother's house" (132).

Ngugi gives Mau Mau War a human face because he and members of his family suffer as a result of his brother in the war. He recounts a sad ordeal towards the end of the narrative when the train

leaves him because he does not have a pass book. The new system of identification is introduced as a way of arresting members of the guerrilla. Ngugi is harassed by British soldiers because he is believed to be a Mau Mau sympathiser. He blames the war for his father's change of attitude and concludes that it is colonization that has brought hatred among African countries. However, through the challenges of the war, a strong personality emerges in Ngugi- a young boy who is hardworking and dares to dream even in the worst of times.

Ngugi's family also plays an important role in his development. His family which consists of his father's four wives and all their children forms an enclosed and secure world to the growing mind of Ngugi. Before he joins school this family is all he knows. He learns the basic values of life from here. He is born into an already functioning community of wives and older step brothers and sisters. His good behaviour comes from the discipline that he gets from home. He states, "the four women forged a strong alliance vis-a-vis the outside world, their husband, and even their children. Any of them could rebuke and discipline any one of us kids, the culprit likely to get additional punishment if she complained to the biological mother" (17).

The family conventions like the storytelling evenings at home moulded Ngugi into a keen listener right from his early years of life and it seems his imaginative ability that later enables him create fictional works emanated from these evening sessions. He gains the knowledge about his country's history from some of the stories he listens to here. The ceremonies, like the initiation into adulthood through circumcision, were familial and personal at the same time and this act leaves a deep impression on Ngugi. He learns other values of life from this ritual like self control and courage. When his parents disagree and later his father sends him away along with

his brother, Ngugi mourns the loss of his family. All these experiences in his family contribute to his development. Most of these are harrowing and challenging but he emerges strong and determined. Some of these are milestones in his growth and development. His childhood games with his younger brother Njiju and his age mates especially his friend Kenneth also mould in him the spirit of determination and hard work.

Ngugi reveals his other identities that he acquires after he joins his mother at his paternal grandfather's place. This happens when his family is disintegrated. It is at this place that we come across Ngugi's determined spirit. He helps his mother to sell charcoal to raise his tuition fee for his primary education. He stops at nothing to figure out ways of helping his mother to get money. All the experiences to adapt to the new environment and make life comfortable earn him new identities first as a stranger, a mole catcher, and a scribe. In all these struggles Ngugi portrays a determined spirit to fight on.

Ngugi possesses a mark of independence of mind which he portrays in the sacrifice he takes when he makes a decision not to accompany his mother on a trip to Elburgon by train. Although this trip appears to be important to him, he remembers the pact he made with his mother about his education and stays back. He cannot abandon his dreams for a trip. This character trait is also portrayed by his mother when she is firm in her decision not to give her husband the proceeds from the farm produce. From this act of his mother I am persuaded to believe that this is a trait Ngugi inherits from her. All these experiences in Ngugi's life help us understand the growth of his own personality. By overcoming the challenges, Ngugi portrays a gradual development from a naive boy to a determined and decisive teenager. These experiences that are full of hardships

and a few happy moments like the time his mother tells him he will start going to school constitute what moulds him into the Ngugi we meet at the end of the narrative.

3.6 Point of View

The autobiography depends on the subject of the narration- the writer. As an aspect of self-writing, Ngugi employs the first person point of view in narrating his life experiences and the events that surround him during the period his narrative covers. This narrative voice enables him to let us into his worldview from a personal perspective. It is this first person point of view that allows the readers to peep into Ngugi's childhood experiences as he narrates them in *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir*. The readers are introduced to the actions in the narrative through the "I" narrator. They see the action through the sight, the smell, the hearing, the taste, and the feelings of Ngugi as the "I" narrator also referred to as the autobiographical voice. The experiences are thus revealed through his eyes. The "I" pronoun, for example is used in this case, "I was born in 1938, under the shadow of another war, the Second World War, to Thiong'o wa Nducu my father, and Wanjiku wa Ngugi, my mother" (5).

The "I" narrator allows Ngugi to accommodate the imagined audience through the provision of sufficient information of relevant context and detail. He does this by giving descriptions and exemplifications in the narrative. He makes his lived experiences understandable by adding details which help in showing how significant the experiences are to him. He gives a vivid description of his father's homestead which leaves the reader with a clear picture of the compound. He says:

My earliest recollection of home was of a large courtyard, five huts forming a semicircle. One of those was my father's where goats also slept at night. It was called a *thingira*. My father's wives, or our mothers as we called them, would take food to his hut in turns. Each woman's hut was divided into spaces with different functions, a three-stone fireplace... (5)

The "I" narrator is a witness to and a part of all the experiences in the narrative including the occurrences that he was told. When the narrator, for example, gives the background information about historical figures and incidents of the first missionary schools, he informs us that he has come to know of these happenings through the storytelling sessions at home and from his friend Ngandi Njuguna. In this case the "I" narrator is seen everywhere throughout the narrative and becomes a dominant perspective used by Ngugi which in turn makes the narrative voice a cohesive device in the narrative.

Although the narrator employs the first person pronoun in the narrative as a dominant perspective there are occasions when he realises the limitations of this voice and shifts to other perspectives. The narrator, for example uses "you" to distance himself from the situation he narrates. He shifts his perspective because the experience is too painful for him to narrate as the subject. In this case Ngugi uses it when giving a commentary on the incident when his father banishes him and his brother from the company of his other siblings. He says, "But it is not good to have your own father deny you as one of his own children" (62).

The narrator also uses “we” which reveals to the reader that he is not neutral in his observations and the events that he experiences. The use of this perspective lets us know his state of partiality when it comes to matters affecting the community. When he narrates the activities of the first white men to come to his village, the narrator is on the side of his people. He says, “We saw white men making a road, white men who were not supervising blacks but were actually breaking the stones themselves. Later more of these workmen came to our place asking for eggs” (24).

Ngugi uses dialogue to complement the “I” narrative voice when he tells the events that lead to his brother’s escape to the mountains. The shift allows him to stand aside and observe the events. It is from this conversation that we learn about the different perspectives the villagers take when his brother escapes. He observes:

“We could hear gunfire,” some were saying.

“I saw them shoot at him with my own eyes”

“But he didn’t die!”

“Die? Hmm! Bullets flew at those who were shooting

“No, he flew into the sky and disappeared in the clouds.” (2)

Ngugi uses a dialogue between himself and the mother when he tells the reader how his mother introduced to him the idea of going to school and how he and his mother made a pact then that could not be broken. I observe that this incident is significant in his life and that Ngugi feels it

can only be captured well in a dialogue. It is the school that makes him the Ngugi we realise at the end of the narrative.

This shift from the first person pronoun to another person allows Ngugi to present the people's struggle for their land, and this was a painful historical experience. He gives this account objectively through the eyes of Ngandi, his friend, who is much older than him. Ngugi then says, "According to Ngandi, Ole Ngurueni, a tale of displacement, exile, and loss was really a story of Kenya; people's resistance was a harbinger of things to come" (80).

In the narrative, as revealed, the first person narrative voice aids Ngugi to be at the centre of the narrative such that all the events revolve around him as the narrative unfolds. He tells the story both as a participant and an observer. He is more of an observer when he is still a small child but later he takes part in the events that mould him into the person we meet at the end of the narrative. So far I have explored Ngugi's use of the narrative voice and how it is effective in narrating his story in *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir*.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined how the writer has crafted his story artistically in *Dreams in a Time of War*. This has been done through the discussion of Ngugi's portrayal of particular aspects of autobiographical artistry. These aspects are: plot, personalities, story, and the point of view as used by the writer. I noted that cohesion and unity exist in the text through the writer's use, of the 'I' narrative voice for the voice appears throughout the narrative and where the voice is limited in conveying his meaning; he has used dialogue, second person pronoun, and the plural

form of the first person pronoun. There are other techniques Ngugi has used to show artistry in his narrative like the use of flashback and foreshadowing to create suspense and to help him look back. Ngugi's use of suspense and humour whets the appetite of the reader. The idea of a seamless transition from one section to the next in terms of plot is evident and has resulted into an organic unity causing cohesion in the narrative.

His use of photographs, dedication note and dates of events as para-textual elements that have complimented, given more meaning, and corroborated his narrated mode giving credibility to the narrative. Ngugi has also employed strategies in his narrative to create empathy in his readers by narrating and vividly describing experiences that are painful to him.

Therefore, I am persuaded to conclude that *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir* is a work of its author's maturity and also a product of a painfully acquired state of composure.

CHAPTER FOUR

ARTISTRY IN *IN THE HOUSE OF THE INTERPRETER*

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I seek to examine the artistry and literariness of Ngugi's life narrative as he tells it in *In the House of the Interpreter*. My focus is on how and to what extent Ngugi summons and infuses various aspects of autobiography in narrating his life story so that *In the House of the Interpreter* is read as an interesting autobiography.

To accomplish the above goal in this chapter, I identify and analyse aspects of artistry in autobiography as they are portrayed in *In the House of the Interpreter*. I discuss the story, the plot which explores the journey motif and the dream motif, the personalities and the non personalities that mould the protagonist's life into what he becomes at the end of the narrative, and the narrative voice. My analysis further examines the strategies that Ngugi uses and which contribute to the credibility of his story and how Ngugi's narration and narrative create empathy in the reader which also contributes to the sustained reading of the story. I discuss the strategies and the creation of empathy under the story as an aspect. All the four aspects constitute artistry in *In the House of the Interpreter* as an autobiographical text.

4.2 The Narrative

In the House of the Interpreter is a story that runs from 1955 to 1958, a period of four years while Ngugi is at the Alliance High School. It begins when he is seventeen years old and ends when he is twenty years of age. *In the House of the Interpreter* opens at the end of Ngugi's first

term at Alliance High School. He is on his way back home from school. He is full of excitement and hope. Excitement because he is travelling third class which is better than the time he left home for the school in a goods train. He has hope for he is going to reunite with his sisters and younger brother, and he is going to inform his mother about his good performance at school: He was among the top in his class.

Ngugi divides *In the House of the Interpreter* into five parts with subsections: A Tale of Home and School; A Tale of Souls in Conflict; A Tale of the Street and the Chamber; A Tale of Two Missions, and last, A Tale of the Hounds at the Gate. Each of these parts is further graphically subdivided into smaller sections which result into the seventy five chapters of the entire narrative. Ngugi does stick to the time line by designating the five parts with their years of occurrence, starting from 1955 when he joins Alliance to 1959 four months after his secondary education.

Ngugi gives an overview of his feeling of shock after discovering that his home is no more. Through a vivid description of the former home, he lets the reader visualize the suffering of the villagers after losing their homes. He covers this experience in the first section of the first sub title. From here all the other incidents that Ngugi recalls, selects and presents from his school holidays are meaningful in the revelation of the dehumanising acts that people went through from the colonial system in the country. He wonders at the sight of mounds of rubble; “How could a whole village, its people, history, everything vanish, just like that?” (3).

In his second subsection, “A Tale of souls in conflict” he narrates the episode of screening at school to find out those who had taken an oath of allegiance to the Mau Mau (35) the curriculum at school which glorified the West (39) and fear of going back home for holiday and not coming back if the authority finds out he is related to Wallace Mwangi who has escaped into the mountains to join the guerrilla fighters (43). All are selected for their importance in showing Ngugi’s disturbed state and how he realizes that even the school that he refers to as the sanctuary does not offer him the atmosphere that he needs for his growing mind.

Under “A Tale of the Street and the Chamber”, he captures events that occur elsewhere, by this time he is in his third year at school. He talks about the Suez Canal Conflict (65) and Ghana’s independence from Britain (66), to reveal that even though the school was no longer a sanctuary, it increased its character as a window through which he could catch glimpses of what was unfolding outside.

In the last subsection, “A Tale of Hounds at the Gate,” Ngugi moves the narrative from April 1959; four months after he left school then 1957, it moves back to 1920 then ends in July 1959. This bringing together of events from different periods of time emphasizes a fact of the nature of memory of the narrator in an autobiography which recalls then orders the events for effect. This shift in time allows Ngugi to show his psychological state and his character though he is narrating an event that occurred in April 1959, when he is arrested because he does not have papers to show that he pays taxes.

He takes us through the events and circumstances at the Alliance High School while keeping tabs on the happenings and occurrences of home, particularly when he is on holiday. There is evidence of fear, confusion, and bitterness when he reaches where his home should be and discovers that it is no more. Ngugi's vivid description of the whole situation leaves one with a clear picture of what his homestead looks like. He states:

My mother's hut and my brother's house on stilts have been razed to the ground. My home, from where I set out for Alliance only three months ago, is no more. Our pear tree is still standing, but like the ashy edge, it's a silent witness. Casting my eye beyond, I suddenly realise the whole village of homesteads has disappeared. The paths that had crisscrossed the landscape, linking, the scattered dwellings into a community, now lead from one mound of rubble to another, tombs of what has been. There is not a soul in sight. (2)

He later discovers that the old independent households from different ridges have been gathered into one concentration village without regard to old neighbourhood. When he finally locates his home, Ngugi earns himself a new identity- a stranger. He is a stranger in his own village because so many things have changed while he was away at school. His family is suffering because his brother, Mwangi, has joined the Mau Mau Uprising.

The fear that sets the story rolling from the start affects his stay at the Alliance High School and it is this constant fear of falling victim of the British forces that disturbs Ngugi right through the narrative. Through his sense of smell he is able to remember the first hospital he attended and he

compares the hospital with his dormitory at school and says that the dormitory smells of lavender which is quite different from the hospital.

He narrates his experiences at school and he tells us his relationship with the other students and teachers in the school. It is through his narration that his story becomes the story of his classmates. Through his story we learn the characters of the other people he mentions and the effect these people have on his life. He talks about the principal of the Alliance High School, Carey Francis and students like Bethuel Kiplagat. His telling of certain experiences at school aids him in remembering other situations he had gone through before he joins the school. He narrates how his English lessons, were full of questions and deferring perspectives from his fellow students and how these episodes reminded him of his friend, Kenneth, a fellow pupil in primary school. He remembers:

In my first few weeks at Alliance, I had looked for someone with whom I could argue the way Kenneth and I used to do. I was convinced that Kenneth could have more than held his own with any of my fellow students. (14)

Further, Ngugi narrates about his first time to watch a full length play at school and how the play made him develop an interest in theatre which later moulded him into a playwright. When he eventually returns to school at the beginning of the second term he is a boy full of thoughts of the doom awaiting his brother, Mwangi, and his fellow guerrillas for defying the calls by the British forces to surrender. Even with the fear that seems to engulf him, he is worried that he has not

made a significant mark in school intellectually. He says he was ever mindful that the twenty others in the other stream performed better than him. Which later turned out not to be true.

In school, life is full of puzzles for him. From the different subjects that he is introduced to there is the discovery of great and important words like beakers and compounds that he learns in chemistry. He learns a great deal about table manners in his English class. There are new books, choir, drama and scouting clubs.

Later comes the experience of being screened in school to find out those related to Mau Mau guerrillas. He learns that his case is serious and the authorities expect him to go back to Limuru for the exercise so that he can continue with his education. There is the experience of being caught up in a military dragnet outside the school compound and his first encounter with the principal of Alliance High School when he and the other boys extended their stay out of school. His story captures a lot of interruptions while he is at school but he still becomes a successful boy at the end of the narrative.

Ngugi refers to the Alliance High School as a sanctuary for he believes it keeps the “hounds” away- the British soldiers. From the story he is not the only one who takes the school to be a sanctuary but there are other students in the school with similar woes. There are those students who fear retaliation by the colonial forces because their relatives were guerrillas in the mountains on one hand and on the other, there are those who fear retaliation by Mau Mau because their fathers are loyalists home guards. Ngugi also talks of his conversion to Christianity and how he

was disappointed that through his evangelical ministry he was not able to convert a single soul to Christianity.

Throughout the story he mentions his mother who stands as a pillar in his life. In his last year in school Ngugi does voluntary work. He even becomes the leader of the group of students who leave school every Sunday to preach in the nearby churches, an activity which was a humbling experience in his life. At long last he sits for his final examination in 1958 and leaves the Alliance High School for good to wait for the results.

As he tells the story of his life at school, he also talks about life at home especially during the school holidays. Since their move to the concentration villages, the villagers remain as strangers and the feeling troubles Ngugi a lot. Not older than twenty, he takes it upon himself to explore ways in which the members of the village might work together and create a sense of community in them. He is happy in the end when he sees the villagers gathering, in groups and the occasional dancing in people's homes. Ngugi observes:

The challenge of forging a togetherness among the youth of the new villages would not leave my mind. When later I went back to Kamirithu on April 18th for the first break of the year, I started contacting Limuru boys and girls now in high school and those in their last year of their primary, to explore ways in which we might work together. (73)

Ngugi goes back home for holiday and learns that his brother, Mwangi, has been captured by the British forces, and his mother detained in the home guard post for questioning. He narrates how the state of emergency caused fear and panic in the villagers with its mass arrests and public hangings. The collective reflection affects Ngugi as he views the situation at home and feels the villagers including his family is suffering under the British authorities.

The end of his story captures his suffering in the hands of the British soldiers four months after he leaves the Alliance High School. He is an untrained teacher at Kahunguini Primary School in Gatundu pending results of the Overseas Cambridge School Certificate Examination that he took the previous year. On the fateful day he has collected his wages and he has also received a letter of acceptance at the Makerere University. Ngugi is both excited, and hopeful. Excited to share the good news of his good performance with his mother and hopeful that at long last the result of the pact he made with his mother twelve years ago has come to pass. The dream has been realised.

His journey is interrupted by the British soldiers who demand papers to show that he has paid his taxes. Since he does not have them he is put into a remand along with other people. The event proves to be a psychological torture in his mind and at one point he feels he might miss the chance to join the university. The story ends with him in court and he confidently defends himself which earns him his freedom and at long last he is back at the Limuru Railway Station, boarding a passenger train, not a cargo one this time, bound for Kampala, Uganda. *In the House of the Interpreter* is giving Ngugi's story in an effort to tell the story of the larger Kenyan

community that are oppressed under the British Colonial rule. The fear of the British soldiers that follows him in school is the same fear that has engulfed the whole country.

Ngugi succeeds in creating suspense at the end of his narrative leaving the reader, asking questions like, what would lead to his arrest? Does he mean another arrest? Suspense is an important element of plot for it draws the reader to the story by challenging the reader's intelligence. Ngugi at the beginning of the narrative creates suspense when he vividly gives a desolate picture of his home when he comes for first term holiday; he leaves the reader wondering why the whole village has been moved to a concentration village after their houses have been burnt by the British soldiers. This kind of suspense creates tension that promises resolution as one continues to read the narrative.

Ngugi has divided his narrative into subsections. These subsections act as suspense strategies in the narrative. In "A Tale of the Hounds at the Gate," he gives the reader hints about what takes place under this section and he succeeds in putting the readers in an anticipatory mood prior to their reading of the section. Ngugi lets the reader know that it is the British soldiers that he refers to as the "hounds" in the previous section. The readers then would wonder what the soldiers are doing at the gate. With these subtitles Ngugi conveys the tension and excitement at those moments with his readers and by so doing the readers find it difficult to disengage from the unfolding accounts.

His way of narration is another strategy of suspense. He puts the reader on tenterhooks by delaying in revealing the information that the reader anticipates. He does this by creating

precognition in the mind of the reader and he is able to exploit this to pull the reader along his narrative path of suspense. When he is remanded by the British soldiers, he gives the reader hope that he would be released soon but he ends up staying for almost one week. He states:

The white District Officer, who apparently does not spent nights in the post, finally drives in. Perhaps this is a testament to Kabae's power and influence. Life visibly starts all around...Eventually, it is my turn into the office...As far as I can see, your papers are in order, he says handing them back to me. You can go, he continues wearily...It is the police interpreter. He stops me. (126)

In *In the House of the Interpreter*, repetition of certain words is a clear indication of the significance the narrator pegs to such words. He repeats the word "hounds" every time he goes back to school from holiday. The hounds are the British forces including the home guards that make life extremely difficult for the people. This word appears throughout the narrative to emphasise the constant fear that Ngugi suffers as a result of the British forces. This constant reference to the word shows how it has significance in his growing mind. Close to this is his constant reference to Mugumo tree which, allows him to attach meaning to objects that are relevant in his life. Mugumo tree becomes a symbol of hope and continuity amidst the struggles that Ngugi goes through.

He finds hope in identifying with the symbol of the Mugumo tree. The characteristics of the tree inspire him by showing him that he is strong enough to beat all the challenges that he goes

through. It is under the Mugumo tree that his brother, Mwangi, buries his gun before he surrenders to show that the struggle has to continue another day. This act reveals a sign of hope.

Ngugi's mother roasts potatoes under the Mugumo tree in the middle of the field. It is here that he introduces the reader to his father for the first time in the narrative. He reveals that there are signs that his father has been meeting his mother under this tree and Ngugi is happy about it which translates into good relationship between his parents (62). He learns through his mother about the qualities of the tree which makes him flash forward about writing his first short story later titled *Mugumo, the Fig Tree*. Ngugi observes:

They were strong and deep, (referring to its roots) and that's why a Mugumo never succumbed to prevailing winds and changing weather and lasted many years... Many years later my writing would start with a short story titled *Mugumo, the Fig Tree*. (63)

There are incidents of contrast as he narrates his story. His use of contrasting situations aid him in supplying the reader with a vivid description of the situation at hand which also help him in giving a clear meaning of what he intends for the reader. When describing his first English class at the Alliance High School, Ngugi contrasts the table manners he is being taught by Mr. Oades to his home. He says: "It was all abstract, so different from my rural cuisine of *Ugali* and *Irio* that I usually ate with my fingers, certainly without anybody waiting on me; Oades was training us in the habit of being waited upon" (13).

Another contrasting description which shows how Ngugi felt about the curriculum being abstract to him and the other students presents itself during the same English class when the teacher leads them to his bathroom where they discover bath tubs and sinks and Ngugi comments that back at home his bathroom is the riverbed where he washes clothes and takes a bath behind the reeds which is a complete contrast to what he sees in the teacher's house. In connection to the curriculum, Ngugi praises Mr. Kibicho in his first autobiography, *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir* as the teacher he vividly remembers for his use of concrete illustrations instead of the many examples from the settings in England (135). It shows how Ngugi was not fully comfortable with the curriculum right from his primary school.

The humour, that Ngugi employs in his narrative to describe the discussion among students after the first English class, reveals his thoughts about the western culture. Indeed his decision to use reportorial mode to create humour gives him a chance to fully describe the feelings of the other students. He says, "We recited the order of a three course meal: starter, soup, main dish, fruit and dessert, which some still pronounced desert, to a general laughter... This produced more laughter; how would we eat *githeri* and *ugali* with forks and knives? The *ugali* would lose its taste, someone observed with solemn concern" (13). Through such humorous descriptions of his early experiences at school, Ngugi is able to make lived experiences understandable and meaningful, to the reader.

He narrates his experiences in a seamless way that adds credibility to his narrative. He has gone further to supplement the information in the narrative with para-textual elements which corroborate and show evidence in the narrated text. The elements include photographs and their

captions, letters, list of names, epigraph, and dates of particular historical events and occurrences. These elements also support each other and bring out meaning and coherence towards the realisation of the intended purpose in his narrative. In *In the House of the Interpreter* the first photograph is of Carey Francis the principal of the Alliance High School. This photograph reveals more than even Ngugi's narrated form. Placing it at the early stages of the narrative shows how the principal is significant in his life and reveals that the narrative is a tribute to Carey Francis. The next photograph is of Kiambu students at the Alliance High School. This photograph shows the number of students that joined the school from Kiambu in 1955. There is a photograph showing local residents who are leaving the guard post. The caption that accompanies this photograph is very significant for it helps Ngugi supply the intended meaning to the reader. Without it, there can be so many meanings that can be attached to it.

The photograph showing pictures of suspects rounded up by British soldiers during a sweep through Eastlands, Nairobi augments the narrative part. The facial expressions of the captives reveal their attitude and feelings. The various poses of people relay their pathetic condition which complements the meaning of the narrated text.

Ngugi provides a letter by Carey Francis to Reverent H.M Grace of Eaton Gate to articulate the principal's view on the opportunity to mould Africans morally and intellectually. The presence of this letter in the narrative authenticates the narrated form. At the beginning of the narrative, he provides a list of the names of all the students of the class of 1958 at the Alliance High School. In other words, Ngugi is saying "this is the truth." which gives the narrative credibility.

Important in communicating meaning is the epigraph which appears before the narrative begins. Ngugi borrows this line from Walt Whitman and it conveys a feeling of fear. The fear that dominates the entire narrative and shadows the young Ngugi into the “sanctuary” a place he feels should be safe: “something startles me where I thought I was safest”

Giving the exact dates when particular events occurred helps bring out credibility for these dates can be verified outside the narrative. He gives the exact date when he first joined the Alliance High School in Form One (4). There are dates when Alliance was founded (5), Carey Francis’ arrival in Kenya (7), when the principal went on leave in England (26) when Evangelism started in Alliance (56). Towards the end of the narrative Ngugi narrates the episodes giving even the days when they occurred. This revelation shows the emphasis he puts in detailing the experiences that he faces in the remand. It also gives the narrative a lot of significance.

Credibility in *In the House of the Interpreter* is also seen in the way Ngugi depicts himself as a person with the courage to talk about himself. It is a bold step to share one’s life with the public and this alone shows credibility in the narrative. Right from the front cover, Ngugi announces the credibility of his narrative by providing his name: Ngugi wa Thiong’o *In the House of the Interpreter*. Ngugi’s name here is a signifier of identity and it contributes to his replication of the real. In other words he tells the reader that, “what you are about to read happened to me” This name assures the reader of Ngugi’s authority to tell his life story and promises that his narrative will be credible. His name on the cover is like an autobiographical signature that seals the contract of trust between himself and the reader.

Ngugi confides in the reader by telling even embarrassing situations and private moments in his life which shows courage hence credibility in his narrative. He describes his first English lesson with graphic details when he is introduced to a three course meal. He says how it is his first time to encounter dessert which he takes to mean a desert and wonders how one can eat it (12).

Ngugi is consistent in his character depiction. His character throughout the narrative is that of a fighter, a hardworking boy, one who gains confidence gradually. Ngugi as the protagonist in the narrative values the principles of Christianity between his earlier and later years at the Alliance High School. He draws a lot from Christian values that mould him into a forgiving person. At the end of the autobiography he has lost his faith when he goes to bed with the Lady Teacher. Narrating this episode about his loss of faith creates credibility in the narrative because he is able to say the activities prior to the loss seamlessly.

He narrates some episodes that are painful, pathetic, and dehumanising in his life. Through such narrations the reader empathises with him and he also finds relief after talking about them. A particular incident is found towards the end of his narrative when he is detained for not having papers to show that he pays his taxes. He describes the behaviour of his oppressors- the two British soldiers in a manner that leaves the reader with a feeling of empathy. The cell where he is taken to along with the other adult prisoners is in a filthy state and shows how dehumanizing the colonial regime is. He states:

We are massed together, standing room only, in the dark. I don't know what to do about the toilet. I follow what I have seen others do: shout for permission to go to

the toilet outside, under a guard. My voice is too weak, and the others express solidarity by hollering to the guard for me (124).

Another incident he narrates that is sad and reveals to him that the uniform does not make the students equal is when he accompanies his friends for a long walk outside the school. He ends up feeling lonely and dejected. Lack of money forces Ngugi to detach himself from his friends to walk on his own, little did he know that he would meet another group of students already eating their goodies. He ducked into a veranda of a shop. This sad moment can elicit empathy from the reader and it is a reminder to Ngugi of how far he has come.

4.3 Episodal Patterning

This section examines Ngugi's arrangement of the events and experiences in his narrative. This arrangement is evident in the plot of his narrative. Ngugi not only narrates his life through plot, but he also describes the lives of other people he interacts with within the span that he writes his narrative. He organizes the aspects that are significant in his life and makes them effective on the whole through plot structuring. In *In the House of the Interpreter*, the pattern the plot takes is intentional because it is dependent on what Ngugi wants the reader to derive from his narrative and what is significant in shaping his life.

To achieve a meaningful effect, Ngugi has tampered with the linearity of time of actual occurrences to arrive at an aesthetically whole narrative, which happens because he bases the whole narrative on the principle of memories and associations which enable him as the writer to create a lively picture of his world. The plot of the narrative begins with Ngugi's state of

bewilderment and shows him at his lowest moment and ends with him a happy person after winning the case against him. This patterning is a fitting conclusion for it ties up the story that began with confusion and fear in him caused by the ruling regime and the final triumph and realization of his dream. Through this kind of ordering of the events, the plot has created cohesion in the text by revealing a happy ending to a dramatic life which was full of fear and personal sorrow. Ngugi retrospectively takes the reader through his formative years by representing episodes and experiences that finally end up in the moment of heroic triumph at the close of his narrative. As explained in chapter two of this study it is through looking back that Ngugi is able to discover what is significant in shaping his self-revealed personality.

There is therefore evidence of a movement backward and forward in the plot in *In the House of the Interpreter*. This movement results in flashback and foreshadowing that complement straight forward linearity. Ngugi uses flashbacks in his narrative to show that he is retracing a story that has already occurred. He gives an account of the life of Carey Francis by going beyond the times of the moment when he interacts with the principal to justify the personality and character of Carey Francis (6). Ngugi, for example, talks about the principal's expectations of the school as that of a grand opportunity to morally and intellectually mould a future leadership in the students. This is Carey Francis' opinion back in 1940 before Ngugi joins the Alliance High School.

Giving this past account lends credence to Ngugi's narrative. In this case flashback allows him to foreground certain aspects of his narrative. He gives the background history of the Alliance High School since its conception which creates meaning to his experiences in the school. When he

talks about the historical events and happenings in the country through the British rule, his story becomes the story of Kenya.

Towards the end of the narrative he narrates his experience in the remand and moments after. He decides to narrate these happenings daily from the day he is arrested by the British soldiers, Friday, to Wednesday when he earns his freedom from remand. He treats each day separately with its occurrences. Within the period he is in the remand cell, he reflects a lot upon his past life. This is yet another time that he has employed flashback to bring into play events of the past. He remembers the performance he had organised with the Kahuguini students on the theme of sacrifice, his encounter with the Lady Teacher that makes him lose his faith in Christianity, and the visits by his brother and step-brother, Mwangi and Kabae, are meaningful in the revelation of the repressive regime of the colonial system at the time. He narrates these events while in remand. He narrates:

One weekend this teacher invited me to his home. I was particularly well received, with what amounted to a small banquet of roasted goat meat and *irio*. His one-bedroom was packed with young men and women my age, who were happy to be in the company of an Alliance graduate...And then, just after the food had been cleared, the lantern throwing agitated shadows on the wall, she entered.

(138)

He finally earns his freedom from the court by arguing out his case brilliantly. He makes an observation at the time of his release that, “little did I know that this ordeal would turn out to be

a rehearsal for others ahead” (151). This shows that there is evidence of transcendence in the autobiography covering experiences in his later life as an adult outside the narrative.

The plot in *In the House of the Interpreter* entails a journey motif. There are journeys at several levels in Ngugi’s life. Present are physical, emotional, and mental journeys in his narrative. The physical journeys involve his growth from a boy of sixteen years of age to about twenty years old. These physical journeys also span his movement from his home town, Limuru to Alliance High School, Kikuyu. These journeys that he makes every end of the school term take him to his new home, Kamirithu where he encounters experiences that mould his character. The decision to go home every end of the term is an emotional struggle in the young boy’s mind. He fears the British soldiers and he dreads home for fear of the unexpected- being arrested because his brother is a Mau Mau guerrilla, which might translate to the end of his education. Likewise, at the end of every holiday he makes a trip back to Alliance High School where he is to achieve his dream of being educated.

At the end of the narrative, he makes a grand journey to Kampala to join the Makerere University. This journey is important in Ngugi’s life because it is the other small journeys that results in this big one and he is revealing that it is through these journeys that mould him into the Ngugi we see today. Mentally, he takes a journey that moves him from innocence to experience. At the beginning of the narrative, he is naïve and inexperienced in terms of exposure to table manners and even other skills; but at the end of the narrative Ngugi has acquired debating skills, confidence, tolerance and a driving force that aids him in realising his dream. These journeys provide us with a landscape to look at his difficulties.

Close to this is the dream motif that he has employed in his narrative to attach significance to his experiences. Ngugi's wish to attain education translates into a "dream" that bothers him throughout the narrative. Whenever there is an interruption in his education he feels this dream is about to be shattered. He also has a silent wish, his dream to see the people around him living without fear from the British soldiers.

A part from his wish to be successful in education- his other silent dream, there are actual dreams which reveal Ngugi's yearning for freedom for the nation from the British colonial rule. The first actual dream that the protagonist has portrays him as the only worker in a vast plantation owned by a British master. The symbol of a black overseer beating him to work without rest alludes to the numerous sufferings that Ngugi's people go through at the mercies of the home guards. The public hangings, air raids in the market places, and the arrests without trial are some of these misfortunes. The men in blankets who come to take him away allude to the home guards' sudden change of treatment to their fellow people and the eventual defeat of the colonialists as a result of unity among the people. Ngugi observes, "the strength in numbers has made all the difference" (135).

The image of a prisoner banished to Marsabit in the second dream may be more a statement about the protagonist's condition at the time in the remand cell. The image of the small man alludes to the protagonist's mother and her words of encouragement during the time he stays in a cell for about one week. This dream foretells the protagonist's freedom from the cell. Ngugi's placing the actual dreams at the end of the narrative is a conscious act which translates into hope

that is multilayered- hope to achieve his freedom from the cell, his hope for the nation to be free from the colonial domination, and the people's hope for the same.

4.4 Personalities

Among the aspects of artistry in *In the House of the interpreter* are the personalities or characters who contribute to the personal development of Ngugi. I discuss such personalities as Ngugi's mother, the Principal of the Alliance High School, Carey Francis, and Ngugi's brother, Mwangi. Under the non personalities I examine the Alliance High School, the Mau Mau Uprising, and the Kamirithu concentration village.

Ngugi's mother is an important person in his life. He talks about her with such love and nostalgic feelings. He describes his mother as a quiet, hardworking, and a very hopeful person even in the face of adversity. He sums this with her proverb, *Guturi utuku utakia*, every night ends with a dawn. It is the pact that he made with his mother when he was about to join class one many years ago that keeps his desire burning to attain education so that in the end he manages to realise his dream.

Ngugi constantly makes references to his mother's roasted potatoes. The thought of his mother as a good cook erased all the embarrassments he felt about his new home and in its place an excitement to invite his friends to go and taste the potatoes. Through this he develops confidence in himself. Ngugi could not miss going to work in the fields because he was assured of these roasted potatoes. Therefore through his mother's cooking, he becomes a lover of the soil which pleases his mother. It is from his mother that Ngugi learns the importance of going out and

mixing with the other members from other communities. He recalls, that his mother used to tell him that travelling outside one's home made a person realize that it was not only his mother who cooked tasty food.

The thought of his mother when he is faced with a difficult situation keeps Ngugi's spirit high and makes him fight to the end just to please her. In one particular incident when Ngugi is arrested by the colonial soldiers after collecting his wages from Gatundu where he used to teach; he reminds himself: "My mother will get some of the money." This thought about his mother helps him not to wallow in self-pity. Towards the end of his narrative when he is in remand awaiting his trial in court, it is his mother's message delivered to him through his brother Mwangi that encourages his fighting spirit. She said, "Don't give up hope! Truth never dies" (141). This message from his mother carries a lot. The decision not to give in to the pressure of the arresting British guards is partly as a result of his mother's message. It is a message of hope loaded with a life's virtue; that it is the truth that sets one free. In the end, indeed, it is the truth that Ngugi sticks to, even when the British soldiers manipulate him, that earns him his freedom. Ngugi portrays his mother as the force behind his hardworking character at school and the one who taught him life values such as always telling the truth and being a forgiving person. It is through his mother that he learns the importance of a dream even when one is undergoing challenges.

Carey Francis, the Principal of the Alliance High School, stands tall among the personalities that influence Ngugi's development in so many ways. Quite at an early stage in his narrative Ngugi observes:

By insisting on high performance on the playing field and in the classroom, Carey Francis produced self-confident, college, prepared, intellectual minds. By the time I left Alliance, I felt that academically I could go toe to toe with the best that any European or Asian schools could produce. (8)

Some of Carey Francis' ideals influence Ngugi's life. He gives a detailed description of the principal that sums up his character when he is furious. He describes an incident during assembly time when a teacher walks in late when everybody has already taken their position at the grounds. The vivid description leaves the reader in no doubt about the principal's state at that particular time. It also reveals the principal's character on matters involving time keeping. Ngugi states, "Suddenly Carey Francis started breathing heavily through the nose, fuming, tongue thrust into the cheek, rolling it side to side inside his closed mouth, as if moving a small ball from one side to the other, so that his left and right cheeks swelled in turn... I thought the ground underneath his feet would give way" (26).

This incident helps Ngugi learn that Carey Francis is a no nonsense man and expects everybody within the institution to keep time. It is through the principal that Ngugi adopts the spirit of being mindful of others and to share. This he learns through football where Carey Francis insists that it is through team work that one scores a goal and that the ball has to be shared in the field. That one person does not deserve all the glory in a game of football but rather all those people who pass the ball to the player who eventually scores. The title of Ngugi's narrative comes from his encounter with the principal:

Then said Christian: what means this? The interpreter answered: This parlour is the heart of a man that was never sanctified by the sweet grace of the gospel. The dust is his original sin and inward corruptions that have defiled the man. He that begun to sweep at first is the law, but she that brought the water and did sprinkle it is the gospel. (27)

These words, borrowed from John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, give the title of Ngugi's *In the House of the Interpreter*. When, the principal gives a sermon based on this reading, Ngugi could not stop admiring Carey Francis' incredible performance in which the allegory likening the prestigious Alliance High School to the Interpreter's house in Bunyan's work left not only Ngugi but also the other students with a changed perception of the school. From this excerpt, I am persuaded that Ngugi's narrative is a testimony of the lessons instilled in him and the other boys who passed through the institution and indeed moulded by Carey Francis, the "Interpreter."

The principal's independent character moulds Ngugi into a person with an independent mind when it comes to making the right decisions in life. Ngugi's character of not joining others for the sake of the ideals of the majority is a clear evidence of a good virtue derived from the "Interpreter." He recalls a particular incident when he is a prefect of his dormitory, and he faces a challenge: whether to punish his friends or not when he finds them smoking. Ngugi says his predecessors would exempt their friends from punishments. He decided to go ahead and do the correct thing; punish them (97). From Ngugi's references to Carey Francis, it is evident that the principal played the role of a father figure, disciplinarian, advisor, teacher, friend, and a role model to the boys at the school, especially Ngugi.

Ngugi's elder brother, Good Wallace Mwangi, is another person that has an impact in Ngugi's developmental stages. His weary feeling of being discovered that he is related to Mwangi breeds in him a constant fear that is seen throughout the entire narrative. His days in school are riddled with this fear especially because Mwangi is a Mau Mau fighter. Ngugi says if he would be discovered then it would jeopardize his chances of remaining in school. His dreams are threatened because of the brother. He says:

Thoughts and images of my guerrilla brother often stole into my mind at the most unexpected times, triggered by any association, but most often by Oades... I could not forget that as a member of the Kenya Police Reserve, he could have come into a deadly face-to face with my brother. Oades was a kindly person, and I could not imagine him in a shoot-out with anybody, but when I learned that he would return to England in December, I felt some relief. (33)

This episode reveals how his brother's absence affected his life negatively. On the other hand, he works hard academically to please him and Ngugi constantly recalls his brother's last visit from the mountains to wish him luck in his examination before he joins the Alliance High School. The risk his brother takes on this particular night gives him a strong will power to keep on striving for the best and not to disappoint him. His brother's absence is a constant reminder of hope to Ngugi. So the absence impacted on him both positively and negatively.

4.5 Non Personalities

The Alliance High School has a great influence in moulding the personality of Ngugi. It is at this institution that he develops the skills of writing. Through the debating club, Ngugi acquires the ability to create inconsistencies in the opponent's position, a skill that he recalls and applies at the end of the narrative when he is in court to prove his innocence. He refuses to be cowed by the arresting officers and defends himself and eventually wins the case. It is the confidence cultivated in him at the Alliance High School that pays off.

Through his appointment to be a prefect in the school, Ngugi develops qualities of leadership which aid him in organizing his new village at Kamirithu, for volunteer work in the community. It gives him easy time to work with different people of varied ages for a common goal. The scouting club at school help Ngugi in growing up enduring hard times to reap a better future. At the end of the first term he says. "First term was coming to a close, and I had already been changed immeasurably" (21). It is at the school that he encounters the Christian concept of salvation.

The books that Ngugi reads or gets a discussion from transform his life immensely. His reading Tolstoy's autobiography *Childhood, Youth and Boyhood*, inspires Ngugi to write about his own childhood. He also reads an autobiography by Albert Schweitzer, *Out of My Life and Thought* from which he learns the importance of service to others. He states this about the writer. "My love for volunteer work may have been inspired by the devotion to service manifested in the lives of two desperate missionaries." (111). Apart from the books, his teachers and other students within the school had an impact in his growth. His interaction with students like Bethuel A.

Kiplagat teaches him to embrace other communities. One can easily notice the familiarity with which Ngugi treats the institution. In several instances he does not refer to it as the Alliance High School but just Alliance. This reveals how he became fond of it and viewed it as his second home.

Ngugi's growth was strongly influenced by the Mau Mau Uprising. His brother, Good Wallace Mwangi, joins the Mau Mau which leads to his mother's and sister-in-law's incarceration. His home is also razed to the ground. As a result of this Ngugi pursues his education under difficult circumstances. The fear that he might one day be associated with his guerrilla brother disturbs him and robs him the freedom to enjoy his growth as a young boy. The constant interruptions in his education are related to this war. Ngugi feels that the Mau Mau Uprising which comes into place as a result of his people fighting for their rights to own land is the cause of his mother's suffering, his family's disintegration, and his people's sense of community loss.

Kamirithu, the concentration village, becomes Ngugi's new home after the colonial administrators demolish the people's homes and move everyone to this place for easy monitoring. This demolition takes place in 1955 in the middle of Ngugi's first term at school. The situation in the new home earns him new identities- a stranger and an outsider in his own home. The home guards patrol the whole village and everyone lives in fear of their raids. This condition affects Ngugi whose brother is out in the mountains fighting the colonialists. This village has a great impact on Ngugi's personality.

Ngugi is confronted with the same fear while at school and his studies are interrupted every time he pictures the state at the new home. He experiences a state of loss when he sees his fellow villagers gaining new identities- a collection of strangers, lonely villagers. This pushes him into a melancholic state. However, he struggles to invent ways of putting in place social activities to restore the old community in the new village. He observes, “maybe we who had had the benefit of a high school and teacher training could lead the way and contribute something to help the community discover its soul” (73). Ngugi is faced with the challenge of forging a togetherness among the youth of the new village. When later he saw the buoyant spirit of the youth rising expressing itself in many little things, after his organisation, he felt equanimity within himself. Gradually we see an adolescent full of fear gain boldness and courage and he becomes a leader to the youths in the village.

4.6 Point of View

The last aspect of art considered in this section is the narrative voice. In *In the House of the Interpreter*, the narrative authority lays with Ngugi the narrator himself as the eye-witness. Through his senses he witnesses most of the events he narrates and takes a prominent part in them. His use of first person point of view- the “I” narrator allows us to learn about his world view and what he stands for. It is through this point of view that we get his life story and experiences of the people around him. He as a characterized narrator dominates the narrative, taking precedence over events and situations.

In *In the House of the Interpreter*, the narrative is presented with Ngugi as the “I” narrator. We see the action through his eyes, feelings and his sense of smell. His sense of smell and sight

come in handy in his narration when he talks about his first day at school. The first sight of the dormitory reminds him of the hospital he visited a long time ago. He observes, “My luggage, one box, fit under the bed...the dorm reminded me of the ward in King George Hospital, where I was once admitted because of my eyes, except that it smelled not of hospital but of lavender” (5). Since Ngugi, the narrator, is an eye witness, a listener to the events he narrates, and consistent as the narrator, he contributes to the credibility hence truth in his autobiography. This narrator is also present throughout the narrative right from its beginning to the end making him a cohesive device in the story.

Ngugi realises the limitations of being an “I” narrator and so he decides to employ the editorial omniscient narrator which allows him to speculate on what is going on in the other characters’ minds. The editorial omniscient voice aids the “I” narrator in vetting the truth as expressed by other characters. Through the voice Ngugi not only declares his honest feelings but also edits the motives of other characters upon what they say. This is revealed when he tells us that occasionally he is puzzled by his principal, Carey Francis. When he is summoned to the principal’s office after reporting back to school late, he states:

He did not ask any more questions. You can go, but in future, be more careful. Some of those officers are scoundrels he added, gritting his teeth... I was relieved and grateful that he did not dole out any punishment, but to call the British officers scoundrels? In the world of Carey Francis, politicians were either statesmen or scoundrels. (50)

The editorial omniscience aids Ngugi as the “I” narrator to enter the minds of other characters to reveal what the characters think about him. This point of view is important especially when Ngugi peeps into his mother’s mind to show what she thinks of her son when they go out to work in the field. In one particular incident this feature allows Ngugi to show how his mother is proud of him. He says:

Her love of soil was deep; she was at her happiest when working in the fields... I could see that she appreciated the fact that I was not afraid of working the land, that the high school experience had not softened my hands. She never said, you must go to the fields today, but would say, I’ll roast potatoes for you in the field, an offer she knew I would not refuse. (62)

Through the editorial omniscient narrator, he speculates about his mother’s thoughts to the reader. The same point of view also aids Ngugi to convey the mental state of the mother at that particular time. She is happy and proud of her son for he loves to work in the field. Ngugi artistically varies the narrative voice to create meaningful communication of the many experiences and events that he goes through. He shifts to a collective voice to show that he is not impartial. He takes sides when there is a conflict going on. It follows that through his use of the pronoun “we” and “our” in the narrative, the reader is able to note the feelings and actions of the whole student body towards the happenings outside the school in connection with the colonial struggle. Ngugi does this to include others in the narrative and shows that he was not the only one affected by the war. He is also telling us that he is with the suffering lot. This perspective allows him to give voice to the voiceless- the other students in the school. He states:

We at Alliance could not take our gaze away from the drama in the streets. Each day brought out something new that impacted our view of the country, the continent and the world. Our activities on the school compound now played out against the background of the all-year political theatre in the streets. (67)

Ngugi shifts to “you” to show how deeply he is affected by the burning down of his mother’s hut and distances himself from the situation because he cannot believe it is happening to his family. He is physically and psychologically affected so after learning the bad news he tells himself: “Take your box and walk down the same path you used to take to school. Go down the slope. Walk across the dirt road in the valley below... Yes, move, move, move, Drag the box along” (3). He is aware of the limited nature of the autobiographical ‘I’ so he uses “you” to objectively observe the experiences of the women after the displacement since the women’s roles have increased. He observes:

Women have willed themselves into old and new roles, new roles: fetch water; feed and clothe the kids.... Set up new homes. You don’t even have time to survey the work of your hands. You need a stranger, like me, to view what you have no time to see. The huts are in different stages of completion. Armed home guards patrol the paths of the new grass village. No respite for you, our mothers and sisters and children. (3)

4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined the aspects of artistry in Ngugi's *In the House* by looking at the story, the plot, the personalities and non personalities that mould his development, and the narrative voice. I have discussed the strategies he uses to create credibility in his narrative. He does this through para-textual elements, his courage to talk about himself, the depiction of his character. I have discussed the journey motif and the dream motif in the narrative. Lastly, I have examined how Ngugi creates empathy in his narrative.

He employs the 'I' narrative voice and where he realises the limitation of this point of view, he shifts to 'we' and 'you'. Sometimes he takes the editorial omniscient narrator's perspective. The "I" narrator creates cohesion in the whole narrative. I have realised that the narrative is patterned according to how significant the events are in the life of Ngugi. Sometimes Ngugi betrays himself when he interferes with the protagonist in the narrative by showing the events he is aware of at the time of writing.

Ngugi's mother seems to be at the centre of all the people who influence his life and among these people the principal of Alliance High School plays a big role in his life. His brother Mwangi also has a mark in his life. The Alliance High School, the books that he reads outside and in the school, the different clubs, and the Mau Mau War have influence in the life of Ngugi. Through patterning the events and distorting the linearity of the story by using flashbacks and flash forwards, a plot is realised. Cohesion and artistic unity has been achieved through the consistency of the narrative voice and the patterning of the events. The use of the para-textual elements, Ngugi's courage to talk about himself, and consistency in character depiction

contribute to the autobiographical truth in this narrative. All these have contributed to the artistic fullness in *In the House of the Interpreter*.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored the way in which Ngugi employs various aspects of artistry in his *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir* and *In the House of the Interpreter*. It has discussed the strategies employed by Ngugi in the writing of the two autobiographical texts. This study sought to answer the question whether Ngugi's childhood memoirs are autobiographical texts through analysing the aspects of artistry that he has employed. While the degree and depth of analysis of the use and effect of the aspects of artistry may differ in the two narratives, this study has been concerned with how Ngugi manipulates these aspects in order to artistically bring to the surface his childhood struggles, fears, challenges, failures, successes, and overall development. This study appreciates Ngugi's ingenuity in as far as artistry in self-writing is concerned.

The analysis of the aspects of autobiographical artistry reveals the dynamism of Ngugi as a writer and storyteller. Ngugi has largely been associated with the art of fictionalising the story of Kenya – especially the struggles of the citizens during and after colonial rule and the struggles that have come to characterise the lives of ordinary people in their day-to-day attempts at achieving decent lifestyles. But the two texts under study present another window which reveals another aspect of Ngugi's creativity: his ability and artistry in as far as telling a personal story is concerned. Why can't he be direct and say that he was confident, courageous, hardworking, and honest? Why not give the reader the bare factual elements of his life? The answers to these questions reveal Ngugi's artistic prowess. He decides to go the long way – narrating the experiences in his life with a sense of literary artistry. The sincerity and simplicity with which he tells his childhood story reveals a different Ngugi that is known to the public. These, together

with the paratextual elements that accompany the narratives, all contribute to the credibility of his life narratives.

Although the line that delineates a memoir from an autobiography may be thin, I observe that, going by the artistic rendition of the narratives, Ngugi's *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir* and *In the House of the Interpreter* are really autobiographical texts. Ngugi ably employs the strategies unique to the genre of autobiography, which enable him to artistically narrate his childhood story. His use of the autobiographical form is an effectual means of communicating his experiences.

The study has revealed how difficult it is for Ngugi as a writer of autobiography to distance himself from the experiences of the time he is writing about. It appears that occasionally in the course of telling his childhood story, Ngugi, the adult writer, finds it difficult to distance himself from Ngugi, the protagonist in the two narratives. He sometimes (easily) slips into making comments on his childhood experiences, which are not necessarily part of his childhood story. This shows to what extent writers tell their personal stories without being influenced by the maturity of their thoughts. It appears that because these are personalised experiences, the writers, while remembering and narrating these experiences, are forced to also reflect upon them with a touch of hindsight.

In his interest to explore the self, Ngugi selects, orders, and presents those events and experiences that contribute to his becoming the adult at the end of the two narratives. This leads to the conclusion that memory consciously selects or chooses what is recalled before it is

presented. The reshaping of these experiences creates cohesion leading to an aesthetic appeal which augments and shapes the reader's engagement with the thematic concerns that Ngugi's narratives present.

It is hoped that this study may provoke further studies on the person and (personal) writings of Ngugi. A keen following of Ngugi's childhood narratives vis-a-vis some of the stories told in his fictional texts reveal a semblance of similarity in terms of character prototype and thematic concerns. It might be interesting to subject Ngugi the character in *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir* and *In the House of the Interpreter* and Njoroge the protagonist in *Weep Not, Child*, for instance, and draw whatever parallels there may be. Such a scholarly engagement would give us the opportunity to also appreciate to what extent writers inscribe themselves and their (personal) stories in the fiction that they write. It would be an interrogation of where the novel and the autobiography intersect. Moreover, this study was limited to autobiographical approach in exploring the four aspects of autobiographical artistry; other approaches may be employed to discover new dimensions in the two narratives under study to add to and enrich studies on Ngugi's self-writings.

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