

**REPRESENTATION OF MEMORY IN NGUGI WA THIONG'O'S *DREAMS IN A
TIME OF WAR* AND WOLE SOYINKA'S *AKE: THE YEARS OF CHILDHOOD***

BERNARD CHWEYA NYANTINO

**A PROJECT REPORT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF A MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN
LITERATURE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

2014

DECLARATION

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

Signed..... Date

Bernard Chweya Nyantino

This project has been submitted for examination with our approval as university supervisors.

First Supervisor

Dr. Jennifer Muchiri

Signed..... Date

Second Supervisor

Dr. Godwin Siundu

Signed..... Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First of all I thank the almighty God for the gift of life and the strength to write this project. I acknowledge the valuable advice and guidance of my supervisors Dr. Jennifer Muchiri and Dr. Godwin Siundu. They were quite patient in reading the draft several times and assisting me focus on the task at hand. I also thank Prof. Kiiru, Prof. Chris Wanjala and Dr. Tom Odhiambo for their continuous encouragement when I felt rather fatigued in completing this work. I salute all my lecturers in the Department of literature for their contribution during the coursework studies. Special thanks go to Alice Muchiri and Wanjiru Mwaura for typing and editing the project. I also thank my family for supporting me all the time I was absent from home pursuing this course. Thank you all and may God bless you abundantly.

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my mother, Yucabed Kemunto Nyantino, for the sacrifices she made to bring me up.

ABSTRACT

This study examines how two writers, Wole Soyinka and Ngugi wa Thiong'o, present their childhood experiences while growing up in colonial Nigeria and Kenya respectively. This study set out to investigate how childhood memory shapes the consciousness of the two autobiographers in particular and their societies in general. The rationale for the study was to make a critical enquiry into the childhood memories of the two writers as children and as established writers. This study compares the way Soyinka and Ngugi represent memory as grown up writers from the point of view of privileged child in the case of Soyinka and a deprived child on the part of Ngugi. The two writers grew up at about the same historical time at a challenging period in the history of Africa in particular and the world at large. The study employed the use of post-colonial theory, formalism theory and the theory of autobiography as its critical approaches. The study found out that these writers become major protagonists in determining their own destiny in a colonial environment, the World War II and the struggle for independence. The study also shows that Soyinka and Ngugi's perception of life was greatly influenced by the family, the politics of colonialism, school, sociological factors and other historical forces that were at play during their childhood. The two autobiographies originate from West Africa for *Ake: The Years of Childhood* and East Africa for *Dreams in a Time of War* and the study suggests that despite the geographical distance, the experiences of childhood for the two writers had some common denominators.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iii
DEDICATION	iv
ABSTRACT	v
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Background of the Study	1
1.2 Childhood Autobiographies	4
1.3 Statement of the Problem.....	5
1.4 Objectives	6
1.5 Hypotheses.....	6
1.6 Justification.....	6
1.7 Literature Review.....	8
1.7.1 Nature of Autobiography	8
1.7.2 The Child Narrator in Childhood Autobiographies	10
1.7.3 Other Works on Selected Autobiographical Works.....	13
1.8 Theoretical Framework.....	18
1.8.1 Formalism	18
1.8.2 Post-Colonialism.....	19
1.8.3 Theory of Autobiography	22
1.9 Research Methodology	24
1.10 Scope and Limitations.....	26
1.11 Chapter Outline.....	26
CHAPTER TWO	28
REPRESENTATION OF MEMORY IN SOYINKA’S AKE: THE YEARS OF CHILDHOOD	28
2.1 Introduction.....	28
2.2 The Effect of Christianity in Soyinka’s Upbringing.....	28
2.3 Soyinka’s House of Privilege.....	30

2.4 The Importance of School in Soyinka’s Childhood.....	34
2.5 Soyinka’s Rural Home.....	36
2.6 Role of Soyinka’s Parents.....	38
2.7 The Women’s Protest.....	39
2.8 Soyinka Role Models.....	42
2.9 Remembering Colonial Excesses.....	45
CHAPTER THREE.....	49
SITES OF MEMORY IN NGUGI’S <i>DREAMS IN A TIME OF WAR</i>	49
3.1 Introduction.....	49
3.2 Ngugi’s Family and House of Deprivation.....	50
3.3 School as a Memory Site	61
3.4 Kenya’s Colonial History	65
3.5 Memories of Limuru.....	74
3.6 Ngugi's Role Models.....	77
CHAPTER FOUR.....	83
STYLE IN SOYINKA’S <i>AKE: THE YEARS OF CHILDHOOD AND NGUGI’S</i>	
<i>DREAMS IN A TIME OF WAR</i>.....	83
4.1 Introduction.....	83
4.2 Choice of Autobiographical Titles.....	83
4.3 The First Person Narrative Voice	84
4.4 Use of Oral Narratives	89
4.5 Use of Songs	92
4.6 Use of Yoruba and Gikuyu Words.....	97
4.7 Use of Dialogue	99
Conclusion	102
Research Findings.....	104
Areas for Further Research.....	105
WORKS CITED.....	107

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

This is a comparative study of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Dreams in a Time of War* and Wole Soyinka's *Ake: The Years of Childhood*. Ngugi and Soyinka are established writers of African Literature for a long time. Ngugi is a well-known novelist, dramatist and critic of African literature and literature from the rest of the world. Soyinka is a well-known playwright, poet, novelist and literary critic. The two writers were born in the 1930's and shared the same colonial and wartime experiences as young children. The course of the development of the ability to remember personally meaningful events is a long and winding one. As soon as children are able to talk, they start telling their personal experiences which can well be described as autobiographical memories as they progress from early to middle childhood.

This is a study of representation of memory in *Dreams in a Time of War* and *Ake: The Years of Childhood*. Memory is a trip back to the past in which autobiographers remember their collective past in terms of people, places and experiences. Memory therefore constitutes the material for autobiographical writing. The concept of representation is key in autobiographical writing because the writers are re-living and re-telling the stories of their lives again. The collective experiences have already passed and they are re-presented to the readers like they were happening today. Memory is a trip back into the past and autobiographers remember these experiences which are told in the form of narratives. We will therefore examine memory in relation to the complexity and coherence of the autobiographers' narratives.

Autobiographical memory can be defined as explicit memory for events related to oneself, including specific experiences and development and facts about one's life. The emergence and development of autobiographical memory in early childhood encompasses the contribution of various neurological, cognitive and social factors. It therefore serves a crucial role in human functioning and well-being. Individuals use their memories of life events which are often accompanied by emotions. Autobiographical memory, for example, provides children with a means of reflecting on the past and avoiding dangerous situations and opting for what is positive and good for them. It also presents them with an opportunity to learn from parents and other role models which contributes to their concept formation.

Psychologically, memory defines our personhood and our sense of being as distinct people. Memory has a social role as it shapes our sense of the group through its shared experiences. Memory is important to our humanity and that is why many thinkers have sought to understand it. For many years, thinkers have been pre-occupied with personal memory, its nature and existence in the body and mind. They have also engaged with the process of memory formation and recollection. Memory can also be traced back to Aristotelian psychology in which he viewed it in terms of a blank tablet or *tabula rasa*. According to the French philosopher and educationist John Locke, it is this blank slate that receives impressions of experience which are in turn stored as an archive that can be re-visited as childhood autobiographical memory.

Memory constitutes material for autobiographical writing. The concept of representation is key in autobiographical writing because writers are re-living and re telling the stories

of their lives again. The collective experiences have already been lived and therefore they are re-presented to the readers fresh like they were happening today. These experiences are told in the form of narratives. We then examine the complexity and coherence of the autobiographers' narratives.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o was born in Kamirithu village, Kiambu District Kenya in 1938. His father, Thiong'o wa Nducu, was a *muhoi* or dispossessed Kikuyu farmer in Lord Stanley Kahahu's farm. The childhood experiences that he narrates in his memoir took place on this farm. He gives a vivid description of his family set up, the landscape, communal activities and the presence of the colonial forces that were oppressing the African people. Ngugi attended Kamandura School, Alliance High School, Makerere University College and the University of Leeds.

Ngugi has written many novels including *The River Between* (1965), *Weep Not Child* (1964), *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), *Petals of Blood* (1977), *Matigari* (1986), *Devil on the Cross* (1980) and *Wizard of the Crow* (2004). He also authored three autobiographies *Detained* (1981), *Dreams in a Time of War* (2010) and *In the House of the Interpreter* (2012). As a leading playwright, Ngugi wrote *The Black Hermit* (1963), *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* co-authored with Micere Mugo and *I Will Marry When I Want* (1977) which he co-authored with Ngugi wa Mirii. As an established literary critic, Ngugi has written *Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture and Politics* (1972), *Writers in Politics* (1981), *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (1986), *Moving the Centre: The Struggle of Cultural Freedom* (1999) and *Re-membering Africa* (2009), *In the Name of the Mother* (2014) and *Globanetics:*

Theory and the Politics of Knowing (2013). Ngugi has also published a book of short stories *Secret Lives* (1976) and a book of short stories and short plays titled *This Time Tomorrow* (1970).

Wole Soyinka, a Nobel laureate, was born in 1934 at Abeokuta, Nigeria. He studied at Government College, Ibadan and the University of Leeds. He is a leading dramatist who has widely published and acted in Nigeria, England and the United States. Soyinka's plays include *The Swamp Dwellers*(1963), *The Lion and Jewel* (1963), *The Trials of Brother Jero* (1963), *Jero's Metamorphosis* (1963), *A Dance of the Forests* (1963), *The Bachae of Euripides* (1973), *Kongi's Harvest* (1967), *Madmen and Specialists* (1971), *The Road* (1965) *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975), *Opera Wonyosi* (1981), *A Play of Giants* (1984) and *Requiem for a Futurologist* (1985). He has published two novels, *The Interpreters* (1965) and *Season of Anomy* (1973) and three autobiographies: *The Man Died: Prison Notes* (1972), *Ake: The Years of Childhood* (1981); *Isara* (1990) and literary essays in *Myth, Literature and the African World* (1975) and *Art, Dialogue and Outrage Essays on Literature* (1994). Soyinka is also a leading poet and he has written *Idanre and Other Poems* (1967); *Poems from Prison* (1969); *A Shuttle in the Crypt* (1972); *Ogun Abibiman* (1976) and *Mandela's Earth and Other Poems* (1988). Soyinka has also published many other literary works that are not included in this study and many scholarly papers and journals in literature.

1.2 Childhood Autobiographies

In *Design and Truth in Autobiography*, Roy Pascal says that the study of childhood autobiographies is very important because most autobiographers succeed better with their

childhood than their later life. Ngugi and Soyinka write their childhood stories as adult writers by carefully and artistically selecting and recreating the patterns of their childhood lives. Autobiographies of childhood are also very important because they focus on the self's growth depending on time and circumstances. In this respect Pascal notes that the common structure of accounts of childhood is given by its common theme of growing up. This is a theme particularly appropriate for autobiographical treatment, since the inner development is embraced in outer events. At this stage, when the child scarcely scrutinizes himself, he comes to be and know himself through his awareness of others and of the outer world.

The process of growth therefore takes a lively, concrete form, through observed things and people, as children widen their consciousness in this widening world. In *Autobiography*, Linda Anderson emphasizes the fact that the autobiography as a genre has come a long way. She says that the autobiography has been recognized since the late eighteenth century as a distinct literary genre. It has therefore become an important testing ground for critical controversies about a range of ideas including authorship, selfhood, representation and the division between fact and fiction.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

This study sought to compare and contrast the way childhood memories are represented in autobiographical writings in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Dreams in a Time of War* and Wole Soyinka's *Ake: The Years of Childhood*.

1.4 Objectives

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Compare and contrast childhood memories in Soyinka and Ngugi's childhood autobiographies.
2. Explore the literary style that Ngugi and Soyinka employ in their childhood autobiographies.
3. Look at the role of the environment in shaping childhood memory.

1.5 Hypotheses

This study will be guided by the following hypotheses.

1. Both Ngugi wa Thiongo and Wole Soyinka have related and yet different childhood experiences.
2. Ngugi and Soyinka employ different literary devices in their representation of memory.
3. Childhood memory is shaped by the child's immediate environment.

1.6 Justification

Ngugi wa Thiongo and Wole Soyinka are renowned literary figures who have written autobiographies capturing their childhood experiences. The autobiographies cover almost the same period of childhood and it is important to capture these experiences, similarities and differences. The autobiographies also present deeper insight into the authors' lives that their prose, drama, poetry and critical works do not. Many writers succeed more in presenting childhood experiences as compared to adult experiences, and it is necessary to study *Dreams in a Time of War* and *Ake: The Years of Childhood* as important building

blocks in Ngugi and Soyinka's literary careers. A lot of studies have been carried out in autobiographical writing like Jennifer Muchiri's *The Female Autobiography: Voices from Independent Kenya* (2010), Jairus Omuteche's 'Mediated Plot in the Construct of the Theme of Struggle in Nelson Mandela's Autobiography: *Long Walk to Freedom* (2004) and Issack Mahat Hassan's "Style in Barrack Obama's *Dreams from my Father*" (2010) but no comparative study has been done on Ngugi and Soyinka's childhood autobiographies.

This comparative study is important because we shall examine two related childhood autobiographies from three main perspectives. The first is the contrast that emerges in terms of family backgrounds of the writers. Soyinka was a child growing up in privilege at the parsonage with literate parents while Ngugi was the child of illiterate parents growing up in poverty. Secondly, *Dreams in a Time of War* is set in East Africa while *Ake: The Years of Childhood* is set in West Africa at about the same time. The third perspective is that *Dreams in a Time of War* and *Ake: The Years of Childhood* are set during the struggle for independence from British colonialism.

The two writers also share a common experience of being detained in their countries because of their radical thoughts that can be traced back to their childhood days. Ngugi and Soyinka have also written *Detained* and *The Man Died: Prison Notes* respectively to show their prison experiences which are excluded in this study because our focus is on childhood autobiographies.

1.7 Literature Review

Introduction

In this section, we examined various works that touch on the genre of autobiography and the role of memory in autobiographical writings. This will include books by various authors that have dealt with the autobiographical genre like Peter Abbs, Pascal, James Olney, Linda Anderson and Jennifer Muchiri among others. We shall also examine various MA and PhD dissertations that have dealt with various autobiographies to shed more light on this genre. Finally, we shall also refer to scholarly papers and e-journals that have discussed various autobiographies.

1.7.1 Nature of Autobiography

In an article titled ‘Critical Mirrors: Theories of Autobiography’, Charles Berryman says that the word autobiography was invented in (1797) by a linguist who perceived the need for a common term in English to cover the many different accounts that authors try to make of their own experience (1). It was not until 1976 that the term autobiography was used for professional literary criticism. Berryman also says that autobiography is a genre of writing about the self which was important in our analysis.

In *Dreams in a Time of War* and *Ake: The Years of Childhood*, Ngugi and Soyinka invite readers to enter into their childhood years. As we delve into their early life, we are able to learn about the societies in which they were born, grew up, their likes and dislikes and many other issues. By going through the autobiographies, readers are able to interrogate who Ngugi and Soyinka actually are by looking at their childhood past. This is very important as Pascal notes in *Design and Truth in Autobiography* that ‘autobiography is

only one form among many in which the writer speaks of himself and the incidents of his personal experience' (2). On the other hand, scientists have long been interested in understanding what we remember about our past and why we recall what we recall. From birth, each person is exposed to a world full of sensations and information which are encoded in the mind over time. Unlike adult memories, childhood memories seem to remain constant till old age.

Henry Indangasi says that the autobiography is a prose form in which the author transforms himself into a narrative persona in *Stylistics* (4). The persona then tells the story of his life. The autobiographer not only believes that his life is important but also typical. Indangasi also adds that the writer then identifies experiences in his life that are of significance and describes them within a narrative framework.

In *History and Principles of Literary Criticism*, Raghukul Tilak argues that biographical criticism is very important in literature. He emphasizes that biographical criticism seeks to evaluate a work on the basis of the facts of life of the author. Tilak also adds that such criticism entails a detailed study of a writer's family background, ancestry, personal circumstances, friends, profession and occupation. It also includes a look at the character, temperament, ideas and beliefs of the writer. All these biographical knowledge is then used to explain the artistic peculiarity of an autobiographical work.

In his book *Tell me Africa*, James Olney gives an in-depth study of the autobiography in Africa. He discusses well known African autobiography works like Camara Laye's *The African Child*. Olney recognizes the importance of literary creativity in autobiographies that make the works to have a positive appeal on the readers just like *Dreams in a Time of*

War and Ake: The Years of Childhood. He says that the writer, autobiographer or novelist casts a net of present awareness back over the past in an attempt to find a significance that exists, not only in the past but also the present consciousness to order and to organize events according to the pattern that has evolved as the artist's own personality, his vision, his moral awareness. Without that vision or that moral awareness, the autobiographer will fail to produce a work of art.

1.7.2 The Child Narrator in Childhood Autobiographies

Positive environmental influences improve a child's development of intelligence, motivation, ability to learn, his/her concept of the self, health and relationship with others. In *Child Growth and Development*, Edith B. Njagi advances the argument that children at this level are:

...curious about the world around them and have an urge to learn, which should be encouraged if they have to undergo normal development. They understand words according to what they mean. Children at this age are very imaginative and can differentiate what is real and pretence. They are good at imitating adults. This is seen when they accurately repeat words used by adults, whose meaning they might know (23).

Njagi argues that the age at which a child starts to record and narrate the key events of his/her life is very crucial. This is because it is during childhood that significant development milestones take place. Soyinka and Ngugi start capturing aspects of their lives at around the age of three at about the same time. At this age a child grows rapidly influenced by environmental and social factors. There is enhanced cognitive development

which is characterized by changes in the level of remembering, thinking, memorizing, classifying, comparing and decision making. This is the time that the child is susceptible and responsible to positive environmental influences which enhance and expand development.

In her book *The Child Narrator: George Lamming's In the Castle of my Skin*, Jennifer Muchiri says that children are necessary for the survival of human species and society. She adds that in the study of child psychology, which is critical in the study of childhood autobiographies, readers are able to understand the process of development by studying the changes that occur in children as they mature. Children do not grow up in a vacuum but in a society which is essential to a full understanding of the children's development. Soyinka and Ngugi, for instance, try to reconstruct the colonial situation in Nigeria and Kenya respectively and how far this influenced their growth and development.

Daniel M. Kiminyo also emphasizes the importance of experience in the growth and development of a child. In *Child Development*, Kiminyo argues that experience means the interaction between the child and his/her environment. The same view is held by Fredrick Bartlett in his book *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology*. He says that remembering is 'an active process of reconstructing that is shaped by schema and that direct recalls to things that we have concluded from personal experience (12). As a child grows, autobiographical memory changes gradually from childhood memory to adult-like memory. The number of details and the level of complexity of their narratives can be seen. In addition, there is a relationship between children's memory of life events and their general cognitive abilities such as speed of

processing, source memory and memory for temporal order. Kiminyo says that the child's environment:

...may consist of parents, teachers, other children, cows, things and actions. The child is born with sensorimotor operations or responses to perform upon his/her environment in order to 'know' it. Psychologists, educationists and paediatricians as well as nutritionists point out that the child's earliest years are the time of most rapid physical and mental growth (20).

This applies perfectly to Soyinka and Ngugi's growth. Many of the events they narrate from their childhood draw heavily from the environments of their growth. Soyinka, for example, uses space to narrate about his childhood. He uses the parsonage, the school, the nearby towns, the rural setting at Isara and adult role models to tell his narrative. Ngugi on the other hand relies heavily on important sites like Kenya's national history, use of real pictures, the school, the village, the family trope and Limuru Town to narrate his childhood story.

In *Ake: The Years of Childhood* and *Dreams in a Time of War* Soyinka and Ngugi give the stories of their early life. They invite the readers into their families including their parents, siblings, relatives and friends. This is essentially the story of 'the self' as the subject. This is also closely related to what Linda Peterson calls 'self-representation' in *Victorian Autobiography: The Tradition of Self Interpretation*. The genre of autobiography involves self-representation like narration of one's experiences and interpretation of the meaningful lived experiences in shaping the personality of the authors. Soyinka and Ngugi engage in the process of retrospection and introspection to

emphasize the meaningfulness of the experiences that they recall and narrate. For instance, the two authors foreground the role of the family, school and locality as very pivotal in their formative years.

1.7.3 Other Works on Selected Autobiographical Works

Norman K. Denzin refers to self-experience as individuals meeting, confronting, passing through, and making sense of events in their lives in *Interpretative Biography*. Roy on the other hand says that the inner self of the autobiographer is the most precious reality that gives meaning to his life. *Ake* and *Dreams* are records of events in a changing society at a particular historical period and how they affected the autobiographers. In his unpublished MA Thesis “Mediated Plot in the Construction of the Theme of Struggle in Nelson Mandela's Autobiography: *Long Walk to Freedom*” Jairus Omuteche says that the autobiography consists of the author filling in the linguistic personal pronoun (I, me) with personal, biographical emotional meaning. This discourse ‘I’ posits another person that only comes alive in the narrativized incidents of the autobiography. The autobiography becomes alive and vivid when Mandela captures deep experiences that call for deep reflective portrayal. The ‘I’ narrator in autobiographies speaks from a first person point of view and the memory is recalled as when it was encoded. Ngugi and Soyinka tell the stories of their childhood as if they happened today. The childhood events are permanently encoded in their minds as adults.

In the second part of his autobiography, *Isara*, Soyinka describes his childhood times as ‘a curiosity about a vanishing period of one’s existence’ (Author’s note). He says that after writing *Ake: The Years of Childhood*, his curiosity was fuelled by the incomplete

memory of his childhood years. Many things came back to haunt him again and again. When he opens his late Father's tin box and empties its contents, he decides to take another voyage into his father's life and times. In this narrative, Soyinka shows his grown-up wisdom with the loveliness of a well lived life full of content fulfilment at a defining moment Nigeria's political history.

Ngugi and Soyinka write their stories as adult writers by carefully and artistically selecting and recreating the patterns of their childhood. Pascal presents a thesis that in autobiographies, writers speak about themselves and their personal experiences. In autobiographical writing, there is a distinction between "autobiographical truth and perfect truth". (62) An autobiographer may choose not to deal with intimate details in a revealing way. This may or may not damage the true value of the autobiography. Roy calls this 'the truth of fact, and on the other the truth of the writer's feelings' (67). This means that the autobiographers may at times choose to recall only those experiences that they are at peace with.

In *Autobiography in Education*, Peter Abbs backs the argument that the central concern of all autobiography is 'to describe, evoke and generally recreate the development of the author's experience'. (6) In a closely related argument Pascal Roy says that the common structure of accounts of childhood is given by the common theme of growing up. He also says that it is a theme peculiarly appropriate for autobiographical treatment since the inner development is embraced in outer events. The child scarcely scrutinizes himself and comes to be and know himself through the awareness of others which widens his consciousness. Ngugi, for example, scrutinizes himself in relation to the children from

stable families around him, the adults and the colonial masters. Soyinka's life surrounds the parsonage, the school, his family and life at his rural home.

Jennifer Muchiri also talks about the transcendental structure of the autobiography in *Women's Autobiography: Voices from Independent Kenya*. She says that the autobiography transcends basic categories especially time and space to illustrate the author's maturity from the events of childhood and youth. Autobiographers write their stories mostly as adults who are able to look back in time and pass judgment on others and also on themselves depending on how they have led their lives. However, the autobiographers Muchiri deals with like Charity Waciuma's *Daughter of Mumbi*, Rasnah Warah's *Triple Heritage*, Wambui Otieno's *Mau Mau's Daughter*, Muthoni Likimani's *Fighting Without Ceasing*, Wanjiku Kabira's *A Letter to Mariama Ba* and Wangari Maathai's *Unbowed* are specifically female voices. This study deals with childhood male voices from Kenya and Nigeria respectively.

Many scholars have also done studies on autobiographies with political themes. The childhood autobiographies like Ngugi's *Dreams in a Time of War* and Soyinka's *Ake: The Years of Childhood* are political commentaries of the colonial experiences of the time. The other examples include Jairus Omutече's work "Mediated Plot in the Construct of the Theme of Struggle in Nelson Mandela's autobiography: *Long Walk to Freedom*" and Esther Gathoni Wanjau's "The Portrayal of Nelson Mandela in his Autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom* and Winnie Mandela's, *Part of My Soul*". Omutече deals with the theme of struggle that Mandela was involved in as an adult. He sets out to examine critically the portrayal of the struggle for political freedom and the

concern of the narrating voice revealed in the narrative. The struggle involves a sense of exile or/and arootment for the black South African in his own land. Ngugi's childhood for example, is characterized by struggle and pain. Sometimes he had to struggle to survive and openly fights for his human rights.

Omuteche also argues that the personality of individuals in an autobiography is shaped by both self-representation and careful interpretation of lived experience. This is an important observation in examining how Ngugi and Soyinka reveal their dreams and character to us as active participants in the events they narrate. Omuteche says that in *Long Walk to Freedom*, Mandela uses retrospection and introspection in relaying the significant experiences of his life. We also see this in Ngugi and Soyinka's autobiographies when they delve into their subconscious past to retrieve and re-live their past through reminiscences, flashbacks and interior monologues to portray their childhood.

Wanjau on her part captures the story of Mandela's birth and upbringing, education, the struggle against apartheid and his eventual detention as an adult in *Long Walk to Freedom*. She also analyses how Mandela's character is revealed in Winnie Mandela's *Part of My Soul* which also captures Mandela's life as an adult. Other studies on autobiography works that deal with the authors' entire lives to the point of writing have addressed aspects of style and form. These include Mahat Issack Hassan's 'Style in Barrack Obama's *Dreams from My Father*' and Nicholas Asego Oluoch's 'Form in Yusuf Dawood's Autobiographical Works: *Behind the Mask, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* and *Nothing but the Truth*'. This study intends to focus on Ngugi and

Soyinka's hopes and aspirations as children growing up in different circumstances and different places.

In an article titled 'The Autobiographical Impulses in African and African-American Literature' Henry Indangasi has argued for literariness in autobiographical writings. He says that an autobiography does not just re-tell a writer's life story but seeks to bring out a higher truth using a degree of creativity. He highlights some works like Mphahlele's *Down Second Avenue* as a narrative that speaks for "an oppressed race championing the cause of freedom" (116) which relates to the colonial experiences in which Ngugi and Soyinka grew up. He says that the autobiographer "selects, re-organizes, rearranges and reshapes the fact of life" (144) using literary features like "suspense, flashbacks, parallelism" (115) among other strategies. This is important because we shall examine the literary features that Ngugi and Soyinka use to tell their stories.

Conclusion

In this section, we have examined various works that deal with the nature of the autobiography as an important genre in literature. We also looked at the concept of the child narrator in childhood autobiographies because the voice of the child is very central in Soyinka and Ngugi's autobiographies. We further examined selected scholarly works done on the autobiography. We now proceed to examine the theoretical framework used in this research.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

Introduction

This study will make use of the post-colonial theory, the theory of autobiography and formalism theory as critical approaches to analyze, evaluate and interpret the texts. The formalist approach follows the objective of analyzing the stylistic choices that Ngugi and Soyinka make in representing their memories. Formalism focuses on the structural elements of a work which includes language, structure tone and various tropes that a writer employs. Formalists offer a close examination of the relationship between form and meaning in a work of art by interpreting the stylistic components. Formalism was beneficial in defining a work of art in terms of literariness.

1.8.1 Formalism

This study used two formalism strands. The first is the New Criticism whose proponents are T.S. Eliot, Allen Tate and F.R. Leavis. The other strand is the Russian formalism with Vladimir Propp as its leading proponent and Ivor Armstrong Richards who argue that a theory in criticism should offer value as well as communication. This is important because in close textual analysis we are able to account for the use of style by looking at what the writer is saying, how he/she is saying it, the themes in a work of art and finally, the meaning communicated. In *Stylistics* Henry Indangasi says that I. A. Richards is a leading voice in putting the literary text at the centre of inquiry. This culminated in practical criticism in literary studies. Richard strongly proposes that a theory in criticism must offer both value and communication.

Indangasi continues to argue that a critic may make criticism which is impressionistic on a work of art. The study of style enables us to see peculiar features that Ngugi and Soyinka use to overcome such limitations of impressionism. Formalism will therefore be an important theory in analysing what Indangasi calls ‘linguistic peculiarities of literary works’ (10). The formalist approach in reality pays attention to the structural elements of a work such as its language, tone and the tropes that the writer uses. Formalists have presented intense examination of the relationship between form and meaning in literature. From close textual analysis, formalism allows the study to interpret and account for various aspects of style like use of unconventional dialogue, literary titles, and use of Gikuyu and Yoruba words and employing of the second first person narrative voice.

1.8.2 Post-Colonialism

The post-colonial theory will be crucial in analysing *Dreams* and *Ake* during the colonial period and the complexities of the rulers and the ruled in British colonies. The theory also addresses the social, economic, political and moral concerns of the colony. Post-colonial literature and its theorists investigate what happens when two cultures meet and when one of them, with its accessory ideology, empowers and deems itself superior to the other. This is part of the period that Ngugi and Soyinka capture in their autobiographies. The colonial situation in the works under study is made more complex by the effects of World War II. The war was brought to the African soil where England and its allies in Africa faced off with German and Italian colonies. For example Africans were forcefully recruited to fight in the whiteman’s war when the British forces in Kenya faced off with Germans in Tanganyika. Post colonialism is also important in studying and interpreting multiculturalism that is at play in *Dreams* and *Ake*. ‘In Introducing Post-colonial Studies’,

Neil Lazarus argues that multiculturalism leads to a cross breed of racial categories of the past and contemporary cultural discourse. The mingling of once separate and distinct ways of life is quite crucial to our study.

England's political, social, economic and ideological domination of its colonies began to wane in the 20th Century. This is the process that is referred to as decolonization. With India's independence in 1947, many scholars like Frantz Fanon, Chinua Achebe, Edward Said, Bill Ashcroft and others opened the era of post-colonial writing. Post-colonial writing emerged to deal with social, moral, political and economic conditions of third world countries now referred to as developing countries. These include Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and George Lamming's *The Pleasures of Exile* (1960). The struggle for independence that Ngugi and Soyinka capture in their autobiographies had by now began as seen in the Mau Mau movement and the march of women in *Dreams* and *Ake* respectively.

In *Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice* Charles E. Bressler observes that the post-colonial theory deals with the tensions or binary oppositions of white versus black, good versus evil, and rich versus poor, to cite a few. Other writers, philosophers, and critics such as Albert Memmi continued publishing texts that soon became the cornerstone of post-colonial theory and writings. In particular, post colonialism gained the attention of the West with the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) in which he stressed the social constitutive of the Orient or the self in relation to others. Many scholars of postcolonial theory often link language and

representation. Speaking in one's language in a way gives leverage in articulating the cultural peculiarities of his group. In a way, Ngugi and Soyinka's childhood lives are what Elizabeth Jumba Mukutu calls 'allegorical depiction of the lives of many others' (17) in 'A Critique of Friendship Across Race and Tribe in two Kenyan novels'.

Ngugi and Soyinka are therefore representative of many other people around them. The other important text in post-colonial studies was Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin's *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature* (1989). Ashcroft et al are critical to the study of the autobiographies in regard to the important aspects of place and displacement (10-11). In this regard the African people in the autobiographies under study find themselves displaced and alienated because of racism and superiority complex of the Europeans and the tensions that arise as a result of this phenomenon. With the publication of these two texts, the voices and concerns of many subaltern cultures were heard in both academic and social arenas. The aspect of equality, fight for freedom and justice are all key concepts that run through *Ake: The Years of Childhood* and *Dreams in a Time of War*.

The post-colonial theory therefore unearthed the inherent tensions of European colonialism. In the Kenya of Ngugi's childhood and Nigeria of Soyinka's childhood the British Empire was at the centre of colonialism and the war. The conquerors not only dominated the land physically but also the hegemony or ideology of the colonized peoples. It is the social, political and economic effects of such colonization that are largely at play in *Dreams in a Time of War* and *Ake: The Years of Childhood*. This makes the post-colonial theory quite relevant to this study.

1.8.3 Theory of Autobiography

The study also employs the theory of autobiography. This theory is associated with a German historian and philosopher, Wilhelm Dilthey, who saw the autobiography as very important in the study of human science. Dilthey sees human science as grounded in the understanding of human life and experience and emphasizes the interrelation between the two. Experience thus becomes a major aspect of autobiographical criticism as this mode of writing is a direct reflection about life. Dilthey adds that historicity or historical consciousness is an important factor in autobiographical criticism. Soyinka and Ngugi's voices in the autobiographies in this study are the voices of societal consciousness and change that were sweeping through Nigeria and Kenya during their childhood.

The theory of autobiography presented an in-depth study of the autobiography as a genre and what marks it out from other modes of writing. Other proponents of this theory include George Misch who demonstrated how the concepts of self, individuality and personality develop through history. Misch saw the autobiography as depicting self-consciousness and that its boundaries are more fluid and less definable in relation to form. Misch also viewed memoirs like *Dreams in a Time of War* and *Ake : The Years of Childhood* as life -writing that is more flexible and outward looking. He believed that memoirs could be written with a casualness and unpretentiousness in relation to form. It is a representation of life that is committed to no definable form. There is unity of author and subject in autobiographical writing which binds all autobiographies because the autobiographer is an I narrator who narrates both as an observer and the protagonist in the narrative.

The theory of autobiography was important in this study because autobiographical memory is constructed within a self-memory system. This is a conceptual model composed of an autobiographical knowledge base and the working self. The autobiographical knowledge contains information on what the self was, is and can be. The information is then categorized into three main areas: lifetime period, general events and event specific knowledge.

Lifetime periods comprise of a distinguishable, themed, time in an individual's life. This includes such landmarks as when one joins school, college and when one starts to work. Landmarks of this kind have a distinctive beginning and ending even though some of them overlap. Lifetime periods contain thematic knowledge about features, activities, relationships, locations and temporal knowledge about the duration of the period. Autobiographers like Ngugi and Soyinka can use the thematic information to come up with broader themes which in turn reflect personal attitudes and goals. Soyinka and Ngugi capture the important periods of childhood in *Ake: The Years of Childhood* and *Dreams in a Time of War* respectively.

General events encompass single representations of repeated events. They can be grouped into clusters with a common theme in autobiographical writings. When a general event is recalled, it leads to the recall of other related events in memory. Such memories can include a first time achievement or failure to achieve. These memories pass important information about the self. Ngugi and Soyinka narrate a lot of general events in their childhood in relation to others that give value to their growth.

Event specific knowledge on the other hand refers to detailed information about individual events in the form of visual and sensory perception features. The high levels of detail fade quite fast in event specific knowledge even though memories of some events endure for longer periods. An example of an event specific knowledge is what is known as ‘a turning point’ in one’s life. The three areas above are organized in a hierarchy within the autobiographical knowledge base and together they make up the overall life story of an individual.

We also referred to the insightful studies done by Pascal on this theory with special emphasis on the historical and aesthetic nature of the autobiography in *Design and Truth in Autobiography*. He is largely concerned with the element of truth in autobiographical writing and lays emphasis on the present moment of telling the story. He views the autobiography as a strategy for creating the illusion of unity and coherence despite the fragmentations of identity. Pascal does an in-depth study of the art of autobiography in an attempt to establish the element of truth in autobiographies. The concept of truth was very crucial in studying *Dreams in a Time of War* and *Ake: The Years of Childhood*.

Conclusion

In this section, we have examined the theoretical framework used in this study. The research used formalism, post-colonialism and autobiography theories as the basis of analysis. The next section deals with the methodology used in this research.

1.9 Research Methodology

This study was principally done through close textual reading. In *The theory of Literature*, Rene Wellek and Austin Warren emphasize the importance of textual analysis

by pointing out the distinction between the study of literature and the study of other academic disciplines. Their view is that a work of literature can be analyzed without the imposition of other external issues. They argue that the nature of literature must be defined by limiting it to imaginative literature. Wellek and Warren also add that a distinction must be made between the use of language in other spheres of life by referring to literary language, scientific language and everyday language. Literature is in the realm of literary language. It is connotative and not merely referential. They write:

It has its expressive side; it conveys the tone and attitude of the speaker or writer. And it does not merely state and express what it says; it also wants to influence the attitude of the reader, persuade him, and ultimately change him. All kinds of techniques have been invented to draw attention to it (20).

I also analyzed the use conventional stylistics like the choice of narrative perspective, songs, oral narratives, use of dialogue and the use of the authors' first languages to render their childhood experiences. In doing this, I depended on I.A. Richards' *Practical Criticism*. I also used the postcolonial theory to analyze the two autobiographies. I saw Ngugi and Soyinka as products of the colonial state who in many ways represent many other characters of their time. Finally, this study was grounded on the autobiographical theory which is the study of autobiographical memory, the self and the what marks the genre as a distinct mode of writing. I also did library research on the genre of autobiography as well as accessing relevant on-line scholarly journals on the subject.

1.10 Scope and Limitations

This study was limited to analyzing Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Dreams in a Time of War* (2010) and Wole Soyinka's *Ake: The Years of Childhood* (1981) as the primary texts. This was because I was interested in childhood memory of the writers' early years which is perfectly captured in the texts of this study. I will examine how the two writers represent childhood memory from two perspectives: Soyinka as a child of privilege and Ngugi as a deprived child.

1.11 Chapter Outline

Chapter One

Chapter one of the study comprises the introduction, the statement of the problem, the objectives, hypothesis, justification, literature review, the theoretical framework, scope and limitations and the methodology used in the study.

Chapter Two

Chapter two considers Soyinka's house of privilege in *Ake: The Years of Childhood* and how the writer re-presents childhood memory including his house of privilege, Ake as a class society, its cultural geography, effects of colonialism, Soyinka's heroes and the effect of the women's protest on his ever changing perspectives about life.

Chapter Three

Chapter three examines Ngugi's house of deprivation in *Dreams in a Time of War*. We look at how he re-presents childhood memory which includes his house of deprivation, his heroes, colonial excesses, memories of Limuru town and the countryside where he grew up in.

Chapter Four

Chapter four examines the literary style employed by the two writers to re-present their childhood memories and their effects on the autobiographical narratives.

Conclusion

In the conclusion, I strive to show that despite the settings that were miles apart, the representation of memory by Ngugi and Soyinka has similarities and differences. I finally suggest that a comprehensive study be done on childhood female writers so that a holistic study on representation of childhood memory is well captured.

CHAPTER TWO

REPRESENTATION OF MEMORY IN SOYINKA'S *AKE: THE YEARS OF CHILDHOOD*

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we examined Soyinka's representation of memory especially how he remembers his childhood days. We looked at his home as a house of a privileged child who grows up in a modernized environment. The effect of Christianity, Soyinka's house of privilege, the importance of formal education, his parents, the Nigerian women's protest, the role models and the excesses of colonialism in Nigeria directly influence Soyinka's representation of childhood memory. Within this setting therefore, Soyinka is subject to some physical, social and ideological boundaries in his early life. When he follows a procession band out of Ake, it gives him a new interpretive matrix in which to place the objects in the protected world of the parsonage compound and what was beyond it.

2.2 The Effect of Christianity in Soyinka's Upbringing

From the beginning, *Ake: The Years of Childhood* foregrounds the centrality of religion in Soyinka's upbringing. There were prayers in his house and church services all the time. Soyinka's mother, Wild Christian, is an ardent convert of the early church in Nigeria. Her faith is very strong and she wants the same imparted in her children. Soyinka and his siblings name her Wild Christian because of her strict adherence to the Christian faith.

Soyinka is influenced a great deal by Christianity. He comes into contact with the Bible in his elementary school where Bible Knowledge was a key subject. In *Ake: The Years of*

Childhood he recalls being taught the Bible which had a strong influence on him. He uses strong Christian metaphors in *Ake: The Years of Childhood* like he does in his poetic works such as *Idanre and other poems* and *A Shuttle in the Crypt*. In the latter two books he talks about the apostles, Christ, Joseph, Lazarus, Herod, Elijah's journey, feeding the multitudes, the last supper, Noah's ark, canonization, martyr, saint and baptism. This means that the Christian tradition defined Soyinka's upbringing from a young age.

All the children in the Ake of Soyinka's childhood are taught the ideals of Christianity. Many phenomena that Soyinka sees around his home are symbols related to religion like the church, St. Peter's School, Bishop's Court and the Canon's residence. Anglican Girls School had also been established to, as the name suggests, teach Christian ideals as well as empower African girls with education. The children in Ake are taught in Sunday School about the virtues of Bishop Ajayi Crowther, one of the first educated and confirmed clergymen in Africa. Soyinka recalls that the teachings about Crowther had a great influence on his life:

Bishop Ajayi Crowther would sometimes emerge from the cluster of hydrangea and bougainvillea, a gnomic face with popping eyes whose photograph had first stared at us from the front piece of his life history. He had lived, the teacher said, in Bishop's Court and from that moment, he peered out from among the creeping plants whenever I passed by the house on an errand to our Great Aunt (4).

This is the image of Ajayi Crowther as passed down to young Soyinka. Crowther is therefore a permanent imprint in Soyinka's memory.

In an article titled “The Nature and Strategies of the Political Subject in Wole Soyinka's Ake,” Ruth H. Lindeborg says that the Bible, among other things, had become a sign of the Western educated African. She says that in Soyinka's new scripture, the experience of the sense tests the Word of Sunday School and interrogates the missionaries' Bible stories through an African agency. Soyinka freely uses Christian symbols and Biblical allusions in his writing throughout the autobiography. As a child, Soyinka says that he was greatly enlightened by the religious arguments that Essay had about God, Jesus and Christianity. Lindeborg says:

The child narrator does not always manage to overturn British cultural hegemony. The Christian word takes over his imagination and cultural paradigms keeping him at a distance from the mysteries of *egungun* and *oro* and the shelter of unnamed space within his own generally Christianized compound (62).

2.3 Soyinka's House of Privilege

Soyinka's house is a house of plenty. His mother, Wild Christian, is a business lady who owns a grocery shop in Ake Town. This shows that in the Nigeria of Soyinka's childhood, women were already economically empowered to participate in modern business that required a reasonable level of academic training. At an early age Soyinka remembers seeing his mother sell, go on shopping expeditions and interact with her customers on daily basis.

The Soyinka family house is depicted as a modern house in the standards of his childhood days. It was made of a zinc roof complete with a dining room, rose garden and a parlour with furniture. At Ake, households were required to meet high hygiene

standards because sanitary inspectors came in unannounced on households to “make sure they were clean” (131). Occasionally, he had the experience of watching cortèges of funeral hearses drawn by pall bearers complete with wreaths, trumpets, clarinets, drums, tambourines and trombones which “depended on how elderly or important the deceased had been” (86).

Soyinka and his siblings are brought up in this modern setting. Essay and Wild Christian's children are fed on processed food like lactogen before being weaned to normal milk and other solid foods. As children, he recalls being taken to modern post-natal clinics that were unheard of in rural Nigeria. The house also had a grown up maid to mind all the other house chores in Wild Christian's absence. Later, Soyinka mingles with the children of the new professionals like doctors, lawyers, engineers, bureaucrats and clerics. This shows that the town of Ake is a class society whereby those who had acquired formal education set themselves aside as a distinct social group.

Soyinka also refers to other aspects of modernity that have an influence on his life. The music the children listen and dance to was from “the abroad” (157). They also congregate to have their meals at the new Western eateries like Kentucky Fried Chicken. The modern girls that Soyinka sees in church visit their hair dressers to do their hair with hot combs. Disco sounds also boom around Soyinka's Ake with contemporary music. The Ake of Soyinka's childhood is at the precipice of change that remains in his mind forever. Soyinka has a nostalgic longing for this exciting childhood experience around the Ake of his childhood.

Soyinka clearly recalls electricity being installed in their house. This is a new phenomenon that comes with the magic of light at the click of a switch. It also marks the advent of the transistor radio that broadcast news and entertainment from across the world opening new horizons. This means that as a child, he was well informed about world affairs. Soyinka remembers the installation of electricity as a kind of revolution:

Workmen came to the house. They knocked lines of thin nails with narrow clasps into the walls. The lines turned with corners and doorways and joined up with outside wires strung across poles. The presence of these men reminded me of another invasion. At the end of those early activities, we no longer needed oil lamps, kerosene lanterns and candles, at least not within the house. We pressed a switch and the room was flooded with light (107).

There are many other signs of affluence in Soyinka's house. He talks about an array of things like salt sachets, soaps, mini-bottles, chipped china, potassium permanganate, pieces of alum, glucose, epsom salts and a variety of yeasts. There were also cotton wads, toothbrushes, Vaseline, metholatum, sugar, coffee, coca cola, pomade, vases, Dettol, popcorn, porcelain clock, spoons, cups, lactogen, groundnuts, palm oil, fruit juice and bottles of lemonade. Soyinka also recalls that there were mirrors, powdered milk, towels, slippers, clippers, smoked pork, cakes, fish, ginger-ale, lemon squash, melon seeds, tinned sardines, mattresses, a dresser, clothes, pilchards and enormous four poster beds. All these leave a permanent mark in Soyinka's mind.

Soyinka also remembers a particular chest of drawers in the house that stored a lot of valuables. There were jewellery boxes, isolated beads, bracelets and ear-rings. Other

ornaments included china pieces decorated in high relief like the cicatrix on the face of *ara oke* and other ornate curios which always multiplied at festivals with the arrival of visitors from outlandish places.

Other signs of an affluent lifestyle that Soyinka remembers include “leaf-wrapped parcels of shea-butter or black, local soap. Jars of sweets, homemade and imported such as Trebor mints, rested on window sills side by side with odd pamphlets, bibles, hymn books and tattered books” (78). All these indicate that Soyinka’s home was well - equipped with the necessities of modern living. He did not live in poverty because he is brought up as a product of an elite family. However, this does not remove him from the other children in the surrounding who do not grow up in privilege and he appreciates interacting with them.

Essay’s house occupied a special place within Ake and even beyond. Children from far and wide were occasionally brought to stay at Essay’s house by their parents’ relations and guardians. They believed that the children could undergo proper “training” by Essay and Wild Christian because of their position of privilege in society. At an early age, Soyinka learns how to ride a bicycle and occasionally, photographers came home to take pictures of the children. He also plays Christmas Carols and the songs of Marian Anderson and Paul Robeson on a gramophone. Soyinka occasionally attended birthday parties for his contemporaries. When he attends one such party, Soyinka decides to inform his:

...favourite classmates that the next important event in the parsonage was going to be my birthday, still some months away. Birthdays were not new. I had shared

one with Tinu the previous year and even little Dipo had his first year of existence confirmed a few weeks before the fateful one at the Canon's house (31).

Through all these material culture and related activities, Soyinka echoes the fact that his family had actually crossed over from a purely traditional African society to Western civilization and influence. These aspects of modernization placed Soyinka in a kind of pedestal of privilege and he seemed to appreciate it as a child and later as a reputable writer.

Many people liked visiting Essay's house by virtue of his position as headmaster. Sometimes the elites of Ake like the bookseller, the junior headmaster, the Canon and the catechist came home. Soyinka heard them engage in intellectual debates over warm beer, soft drinks, chin-chin, biscuits, tea, cakes and sandwiches. Essay was also the editor of the weekly paper at Ake and the arguments they had about God, Jesus, Christianity, aeroplanes, war and Hitler, among others, excite Soyinka at an early age. He says that "Wild Christian enjoyed the role played by the Headmaster's house as the intellectual watering-hole of Ake and its environs" (19). This in turn prepares Soyinka to become well informed as a child by virtue of the special place he occupied. It also lays the foundation of Soyinka's career as a writer because of the interaction he had with different people who visit their house.

2.4 The Importance of School in Soyinka's Childhood

Soyinka claims that he had the advantage of going to school before the age of three. This is questionable because he was too young to join class one at this point. He simply announces one day that "I am going to school" (23) because he had seen his elder sister

Tinu attending school. No amount of guffaws from his parents could deter him from this quest. Tinu's attending school and the presence of a girl's school nearby is evidence of girls' empowerment in Soyinka's community. Even before joining it, he curiously walked around the school to learn what took place there. He had a head start with a literate mother and teacher father. He says that he learnt the art of prose and good handwriting from his father. Soyinka later uses these good qualities from his father to become an established writer of prose, poetry and drama.

Soyinka recalls being able to speak English language at the age of four and a half years. Essay was always the strict father, teacher- disciplinarian. Soyinka says that any mention of "papa gave me some homework" (81) was final and it brooked no argument. Essay wanted his children properly educated and that is why Soyinka attended elite schools like St. Peters, Abeokuta Grammar School and Government College Ibadan (GCI). Soyinka's ability to speak English at an early age and attending good schools is very significant to him. He is able to write and also interact with his teachers. The school organizes educational trips to upcoming industries like the canning factory at Ake town. Such an opportunity made the students to learn the new industrial revolution that was coming to colonial Nigeria. Experiences of this nature were rare for the other children growing up in the rural areas.

Being the headmaster's son also came with privileges for Soyinka. To him, the idea that the other children do not touch him is a privilege but he also feels lonely being isolated in that special class because he wants to grow up normally with the other children. He

seems uncomfortable with the label “Headmaster’s son” which may not necessarily true. When he goes to his home in the rural area, Soyinka's grandfather tells him:

Your Father wants you to go to the white man's school in Ibadan. Did you know that? ‘Government College?’ Yes, he said so. But I am just finishing standard three. So that is still a long time away... So if you pass into Government College, you will leave home and enter a boarding school (141 – 142).

The declaration by his grandfather is important to him. It indicates that his grandfather, a traditional old man at Isara, had actually embraced change. He had seen the advantages that came with Western education and to him, the change was inevitable. Soyinka’s childhood was also entering a critical stage where he was being prepared to be independent as required of one in a boarding school.

2.5 Soyinka’s Rural Home

Essay’s children are like strangers when they visit their ancestral home in the countryside of Isara because of their privileged upbringing. The local people are awed and consider Essay’s children aliens because they were heard talking to their parents in the English language. Soyinka pities what he terms as the miserable lifestyles in the Isara countryside. He says his father’s mud huts were sparsely furnished and the homes of the traders depress them because “their shabbiness could not be disguised” (130). Soyinka the child is already alienated from his roots because he sees primitivity in the cultural and traditional set-ups of Isara.

The behaviour of Soyinka and his siblings at their ancestral home shows the uneasy relationship between Western education and African culture. The children had been influenced to believe that material African culture and language were inferior to the white man's culture. Soyinka and his siblings are chaperoned at Isara and know nothing about the ancestral ways of life. When Soyinka goes out with Broda Pupa to his farm, the latter kills and cooks a snake which Soyinka refuses to even taste. Broda Pupa then recalls that the teacher's children do not eat things like that because they "eat bread and butter" (133). Later, along the streets of Isara, Soyinka and his siblings show their ignorance to their people customs when they meet:

...relations, family friends, gnarled and ancient figures of Isara, chiefs, King-makers, cult priests and priestesses, the elders of Osugbo who pierced one through and through with their eyes, then stood back to await the accustomed homage...Essay's name was called as a matter of fact – the children of Ayo, just arrived to celebrate *odun*. The elder waited, our chaperon smiled and explained. "They don't know how to prostrate, please don't take offense" (126).

In taking his children to their rural home at Isara, Soyinka's father wanted them to have some form of cultural identity. This actually turns out to be a blessing in disguise because it later enriches Soyinka's knowledge of the Yoruba tradition which he presents in his book *Myth, Literature and the African World*. In this book, Soyinka demonstrates profound knowledge of Yoruba myths and world view. To him, the African world is synonymous with the Yoruba world, hence, his traditional African influences are essentially Yoruba. Soyinka's visit to Isara therefore made him learn the superstitions,

beliefs and the centrality of ancestors in the Yoruba matrix. He also appreciates his people's value system, the love for ceremonies, religion and their agrarian preoccupations.

Through the above Soyinka interrogates marginalization of the weak and disadvantaged people by capturing the voices of Isara's continuity in a moment of displacement. The colonial regimes of church, state and the hybrid consciousness influence him a great deal. Soyinka's grandfather appears to be on the threshold of loss and isolation within his own community even if he had taken pride in the education of his grandson. Essay's farm at Isara was already contracted to a paid manager and there was no way Soyinka could go back to settle at Isara if his father Essay had already moved out. All this has imprints of the colonial experience of alienation.

2.6 Role of Soyinka's Parents

Soyinka learns a lot of ideals from Essay. His father was a modern man. Essay's dressing and eating habits are western. Soyinka always watched him with a keen eye whenever he was at the dinner table. He proceeded to chew his food methodically, slicing off each piece of meat, yam, like a geometric exercise. He then lifted a scoop for the stew with the edge of his knife and then plastered "the slice of yam like a master mason" (15). Essay strictly followed Western style exercises to keep fit with a precise fussleness even the most strenuous movements loudly saying "In...out...in out... breathing deeply" (77). Soyinka even sees Essay imitating "the white gymnast who was photographed in a variety of postures and contortions on that chart" (77). Essay also owned a hunting gun. Soyinka adds that Essay-on- the- hunt was "another private existence" (68) altogether. It

is clear that Essay's lifestyle and mannerisms influence the young Soyinka a great deal and this is engraved in his memory forever.

Wild Christian also acts as Soyinka's inspiration. Soyinka attends the Sunday School where he learns a lot of Christian and social ideals courtesy of his mother. She is presented as a loving, caring but very strict mother. She does not shy away from punishing her children including Soyinka but not before explaining their mistakes in detail. Soyinka carefully studies her entrepreneurial skills at the shop. In remembering all this, Soyinka uses the autobiography to emphasize the fact that his parents' attributes contribute a great deal in his identity formation as an adult.

2.7 The Women's Protest

Later, Soyinka becomes an active participant when the women of Nigeria lead a successful women's empowerment campaign resulting in a massive protest against paying tax and the colonial administration represented by the local Alake, the *Ologbonis* and the White District Officer. Wild Christian and the other women of Abeokuta are a liberated group. Through self-education they decide their own destiny leading to the formation of the 'Nigerian Women's Union' (199). This acts as a motivation for Soyinka to know his rights as a child and as an African even before joining GCI. He had keenly followed the agitation of the women of Ake against taxation and silently supported their ideology. This was one of the earliest responses against colonialism in Nigeria where a minority white rule had been forcefully imposed on the majority African people.

Lindeborg (1990) says that the autobiographical mirror of Ake charts the multiple births of Soyinka into a questioning colonial subject, specifically into a nascent political

intellectual. She adds that Soyinka himself had admitted that the women's uprising was certainly 'one of the most dramatic, most memorable experiences of his childhood' (56). Lindeborg goes on to say that there is a connection between the political transformation of Ake between 1945 and 1946 and his own development while at Abeokuta Grammar School. Ake therefore links, in a systematic way, the personal growth of consciousness to local political changes in class and patriarchal assumptions, and to the birth of liberation movements in Nigeria as a whole.

Soyinka is inspired by the women's protest until he turns the rebellion into his own autobiographical act. Beere, Wild Christian and the other match leaders strip the patriarchal Alake, a stooge of the white District Officer, off his authority while the other women physically strip the Ogboni in whom the real power of the king and land was bestowed. Soyinka sees the liberation movements as an affront to imperialism. Soyinka remembers eavesdropping on Beere talking angrily on phone with the District Officer who wanted the women's agitation stopped. She says that it was the white man's mentality that the "Japanese, Chinese, Africans, we are all subhuman" (224). Doudu, the head teacher of AGS and Beere teach Soyinka the need to question the political and cultural assumptions of Government College and the white man's world and adult life.

The last chapters of the autobiography are about the author's observation on adult irrationality. This extends Soyinka's battle with the structures of power to indigenous collaborators and the institutions which help produce them. This is the same idea that Godwin Siundu captures in an article "Wole Soyinka turns glorious 80." He says that 'Soyinka seems to push the idea that our humanity is reinforced by weaknesses more than

strengths – some irrational logic, one would say but which he keeps harping on even in his autobiographical works’ (33). Soyinka terms the ludicrous dress code at GCI as an “admittance to yet another irrational world of adults and their discipline” (230). In Soyinka’s reading of both his life and the political climate of his childhood, it is the women who enable male power and thought. For example, Beere tells him that she was horrified by the District Officer's reaction to the women's match. Soyinka remembers Beere protesting:

Double standards of course. It is just what I was telling the District Officer before you came in, dropping the atom bomb over Hiroshima but not over white Germany. There is a racist in every white man (229).

Soyinka uses the child’s memory to show how the cultural hegemony in Ake is disrupted leading to his political consciousness. Soyinka devotes considerable attention to the class and cultural geography of Ake, Abeokuta, Isara and Ibadan. This particularly refers to the borders between self and community, the boundaries between different groups within the community and between politically charged sites of experience. Lindeborg adds that “identification and analysis of sites which question or invent the normal political and symbolic order of a community illuminates Ake’s play with the borders” (63).

Soyinka becomes conscious of his surroundings at an early age. He goes beyond Ake’s limited space and opens up into a whole new world when he goes to town, church and school. He interacts with fellow school children, Sunday School pupils, women protesters, relatives, villagers, the procession band among others in everyday life. Soyinka also learns that Ake does not exist in isolation. It is a part that makes up the

whole. Other places like Abeokuta, Isara, Lagos, Ibadan, Ibara, Lafenwa and Itoku exist alongside and influence Ake and Soyinka's life in different ways.

In the next section we look at the people who had a positive influence on Soyinka's character and personality development. Apart from Beere and the women protesters, Soyinka dedicates a good part of *Ake: The Years of Childhood* to talk about his role models.

2.8 Soyinka Role Models

Soyinka's role models in *Ake* include his Grammar School Headmaster, Doudu. He dedicates a good part of the autobiography to extol Doudu's virtues. It is Doudu who influences Soyinka's thinking and his portrait directs the last chapters of the autobiography. Doudu serves what Lindeborg calls the "autobiographer's model of textual, cultural and political authority" (60).

Soyinka's character is shaped by Doudu whom he gradually makes his role model. Soyinka admires Doudu's mastery of language which he uses as a means of attacking the colonial order. To Soyinka, Doudu represents the new ruling order as he is the third person in Abeokuta to own a car. Doudu is very thorough and meticulous in whatever he does be it in teaching, punishing, cutting grass and scouting which he sees as necessary in the education of the youth in readiness for nation building and the process of political liberation. Doudu controls his world from the platform of an influential teacher who positively influences Soyinka's life.

Doudu visits England to plead his community's case in the white man's land where he agitates for a University for each West African colony. Soyinka admires his stubbornness that was highly acclaimed because "only our Doudu could have done it" (168). Doudu's life clearly impacts on Soyinka the child a great deal making him extol the headteacher's virtues throughout the autobiography. He learns important lessons from Doudu including his mastery of language which he later uses in his writing, support for purposeful education and being thorough in tasks that he does.

Many women of Ake are also heroes in the eyes of Soyinka. Led by Beere, Wild Christian, Kemberi and others, the women organise a successful protest against the insensitive political order and excessive taxation in the market at Ake. The protest degenerates into a socio-political rebellion against the Alake, the council of elders and colonialism in general. Like Doudu, Beere is elected as the women's representative to England to learn first-hand from the colonialists in their land.

Through ideological help from Doudu, the women's rebellion becomes a major movement that influences Soyinka's consciousness. The women lead the way in social, economic and political emancipation of Ake that Soyinka is deeply immersed in. They loudly attack negative western influence on Ake's social standing by condemning the likes of Atupa Palour who promote prostitution, a trade that degrades the value of African women. Through Soyinka's voice, we see the strong voice of Ake's women against colonialism in a memorable altercation between Mrs. Kuti and the colonial DO:

"Look here Mrs. Kuti, we are trying to hold a serious meeting here. Will you kindly keep your women in order." Mrs. Kuti replied, "So are we holding a

serious meeting or do you think we are here to play?” Further infuriated, the man shouted, ‘Well, tell them to shut up!’ There was a pause. Mrs Kuti blinked through her glasses upward at the man, then inquired, “Excuse me, were you talking to me?” “Yes of course I am. “SHUT UP YOUR WOMEN!” In the sudden silence which fell over the shocked women Mrs. Kuti made the response which flew around Abeokuta for weeks afterwards, as the “grammar” which hammered the ill-starred District Officer into submission (211).

Soyinka agrees with Mrs. Kuti’s reaction here. It had dawned on him that a person had to stand up and protect his/her rights whenever they were trampled on by others. Mrs. Kuti tells the colonial District Officer off in very strong terms. The time had now come for the eventual economic and political liberation of Nigeria from the yoke of colonialism.

Essay is also Soyinka’s hero. Like his mother, Essay occupied a special place in Soyinka’s upbringing. He is a strict father who brings up Soyinka to be viewed as the Headmaster’s son. Essay is an intellectual held in high esteem among the elite of Ake. Soyinka has fond memories of his father:

It did not take long for him to enter my consciousness simply as Essay, as one of those careful stylistic exercises in prose which follows set rules of composition, are products of fastidiousness and elegance, set down in beautiful calligraphy that would be the envy of most copyists of any age... He displayed the same elegance in dressing. His eating habits were a source of marvel to mother, whom by contrast, I soon named The Wild Christian (14).

Essay and Doudu are the faces of the academy that brings change in Ake. The who is who among the Ake elite congregate in Essay's house in the evenings for intellectual debates that greatly influence Soyinka. To Essay, the past and the present co-exist but he fights a losing battle when he tries to take his children to the countryside to have a taste of traditional life in their ancestral home.

In the next section, we look at how Soyinka remembers the excesses of colonialism in Nigeria. He castigates the negative effects of colonialism and advocates for independence of his country and freedom for his people even as a child.

2.9 Remembering Colonial Excesses

Soyinka castigates the colonial excesses in Colonial Nigeria from the child's perspective. He is a child who is against colonial brainwashing that ensures that they sing 'God save the King' every day at school. It was the same song that played out several times over the radio which the colonialists use as a tool with a very wide reach. The women's protest also played out as a major conflict between the colonizer and the colonized. The colonizer detests African empowerment of any kind and goes on overdrive to quash the women's movement. When Beere visits England to press the case of Ake's women who lead a miserable life, the British controlled newspapers attack her efforts. They invite the British people to visit Abeokuta to "see prosperous women, even average Egba women lived in comfort and splendour" (192). The biased newspapers and related propaganda are highly effective tools that the White man embraces to entrench his authority in colonial Nigeria.

The colonialists set up what they call the Native Administration in Ake under the Alake. To Soyinka and the women, the Alake is a stooge of the White man. He administers in conjunction with the Ogboni priests and priestesses on behalf of the colonialists. The Alake occupies an infallible demi-god position. His word is law and when the women petition him against paying tax, he says it cannot be abolished “just like that” (209) because it had been imposed by the White man’s government. When the women refuse to give in to intimidation, there is a confrontation between them and the young white District Officer. The DO had come with the superiority of colonial authority making him look down upon women old enough to be his mothers. Soyinka dismisses the white District Officer’s insensitivity through the strong words of Beere and the other women:

It was undeniable that the District Officer was rendered speechless by Mrs. Kuti’s angry riposte which rang through the hush: ‘You may have been born, you were not bred. Could you speak to your mother like that?’ The District Officer’s open mouthed retreat was accompanied by a welling of the women’s angry murmur. There were shouts on the Alake to get rid of the insolent White man at once, within minutes. If he was not out, they would come in, cut off his genitals and post them to his mother (211).

Soyinka presents Beere as a fighter for the rights of women in particular and Africa in general. He learns about the excesses of colonial authority and how to face it from Beere. She tells him about Hitler and his barbaric exploits in World War II. She says that the Americans chose to drop the atomic bomb on Japan because they see the Japanese as sub-human. To her, the bomb should have been dropped on Hitler’s Germany but for racism.

She sees the white man as “a racist” (227) who considers the black man as a beast of burden. To the Europeans, other human beings were like guinea-pigs to be experimented upon in horrifying ways. Beere even wonders aloud why the colonialists never allowed shorts pockets on the uniforms of African children. It was double standards that in their leading schools in England like Eton and Harrow, the European children “wear suits, all with pockets” (227). The principal of Government College Ibadan, V.B.V. Powell, himself a scout, does not encourage scouting in his school because scouts uniform had several pockets. This leads Beere to conclude that from her experience, “There is a racist in every White man” (229) although there were positive aspects of the European civilization like education, health services and infrastructure development.

Soyinka talks about the cultural erosion that was taking place in Ake during the 1930s and early 1940s. He fully understands the African and Christian supernatural figures. Soyinka also speaks to us through the voices of Ake’s marginalized like Paa Adatan and Sorowanke. Paa Adatan is mad but he gives crucial information about colonial attributes and the exploitation of colonized people in the World War II that was going on. He says that the Europeans were using Africans to fight a war that was not their making and later claim all the glory. He even calls the African soldiers serving Britain’s cause stooges of European imperialism. In this way, Soyinka speaks to us through Paa Adatan and he gives his strong opposition to the colonial war efforts that misused the African people. In this way, Paa Adatan is a hero in Soyinka’s upbringing because he opens his eyes to the colonial exploitation of the Nigerian people.

Soyinka also portrays Sorowanke, the village madwoman, as one in Ake's marginal zone. Her sad story is part of the self-preserving powers of the community of Soyinka's childhood. Sorowanke lives on the periphery of the geographic, social and religious centre of Ake. Lindeborg says that she forms part of 'Ake's tolerated margins of mess' (66). Soyinka, like other people in Ake, gives her subsistence and reveres the spiritual qualities of her madness. The people do not like her for occupying the town square. However, she becomes more of a mother saviour through the symbolic delivery of a baby girl in the middle of Ake's rags and rust. The birth crowns the women's movement for economic liberation. Soyinka recalls that this also marks his symbolic birth into power through the manipulation of language as a future writer.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we have examined how Soyinka represents his childhood memory. He recalls his house in town, his rural home, the Christian environment, his early schooling and his role models with alacrity. He also remembers the effects of Christianity, the women's protest and the excesses of colonialism in Nigeria as some of the phenomena that had great influence on his life as a child and his future as a writer.

CHAPTER THREE

SITES OF MEMORY IN NGUGI'S *DREAMS IN A TIME OF WAR*

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we shall examine representation of memory in Ngugi wa Thiong'o *Dreams in a Time of War*. First of all, we shall look at Ngugi's use of specific sites to organize his memory as a child. These include the family trope, reliance on Kenya's colonial history, the school and use of real pictures to pass his message. *Dreams in a Time of War* is an autobiography about Ngugi's childhood and growth in Kenya during the Second World War. This is around the same time that Soyinka was growing up as a child in Nigeria. Kenya and Nigeria were British colonies in East Africa and West Africa respectively. Ngugi starts his memoir with the following epigraphs:

There is nothing like a dream to create the future.

Victor Hugo, *Les Miserables*.

I have learnt

From books dear friend

Of men dreaming and living

And hungering in a room without a light

Who could not die since death was far too poor

Who did not sleep to dream, but dreamed to change the world

Martin Carter, "*Looking at Your Hands*"

In the dark time

Will there also be singing?

Yes, there will be singing

About the dark times

Bertolt Brecht, "*Motto*"

All these poems allude to some kind of struggle that formed the foundation of Ngugi's dreams as a child for a better life.

3.2 Ngugi's Family and House of Deprivation

Ngugi's struggle started when he was a child and he had to walk six miles to Kinyogori School having eaten porridge that was to be his meal for the day. He recalls the suffering he went through as a school boy:

I had not had lunch that day, and my tummy had forgotten the porridge I had gobbled that morning before the six mile run to Kinyogori Intermediate School. Now there were the same miles to cross on my way back home. I tried not to look too far ahead to a morsel that night. My mother was pretty good at conjuring up a meal a day. But when one is hungry, it is better to find something, anything, to take one's mind away from thoughts of food (1).

Ngugi's early life revolves around his peasant mother. She is poor and struggles to bring up her family when her husband literally pushes her out of home. Ngugi states that she was his "sole benefactor, who always gave more whenever she could" (1). Amidst all the struggles for food, clothing and shelter, Ngugi's mother encourages him to join school for a better life. He presents the image of a mother who is both a victim of social and colonial alienation and a child growing up to be an agent of a new class identity brought about by formal education. Like the other school children, Ngugi runs barefoot to school

sweat streaming down his cheeks, to “avoid tardiness and the inevitable lashes on our open palms?”(1). Despite this difficult start in life, Ngugi, perseveres with dreams for a better future.

Ngugi was born in a polygamous home. His father had four wives and twenty four children. In *Dreams in a Time of War*, Ngugi says that his home was a traditional one with five huts forming a semi-circle. His father’s hut, *thingira*, was the main one and Ngugi’s mothers took food there ‘in turns.’ (5) Ngugi’s dressing was traditional and simple at first, a knotted garment under the arm-pit and tied over the shoulders. The women’s huts had a three stone fire-place, sleeping area and a section for goats. There was a granary for each house and one could tell days of hunger or providence by simply looking at it. Unlike Soyinka who grows in a modern setting, Ngugi remembers himself as a product of a purely traditional Kikuyu community. As an established writer, he seems to prefer a modern family setting to the one of his childhood.

There were large white owned tea and pyrethrum plantations around Ngugi’s home. They had eaten into the once lush forests around Limuru. His mothers, elder brothers and sisters go for work in the adjacent farms for meagre pay that never changed their lives. As he grows up, Ngugi starts dreaming about their land and freedom. He does not understand why things are the way they are and he questions the status quo as a young boy. He remembers:

But, somehow, in time, I began to connect a few threads, and things became clearer as if I was emerging from a mist. I learnt that our land was not quite our land; that our compound was part of property owned by an African landlord, Lord

Reverend Stanley Kahahu, or Bwana Stanley as we called him; that we were *ahoi*, tenants at will. How did we come to be *ahoi* on our own land? Had we lost traditional land to Europeans? The mist had not cleared entirely (6).

Ngugi heavily relies on historical accounts in *Dreams in a Time of War*. Through authorial intrusion, he asserts that at the end of the First World War and the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, white ex-soldiers were rewarded with African lands by the colonial administration. Africans were dispossessed and turned into squatters in their own land. They now provided cheap labour and sold their hard-earned harvest to the white man at prices determined by their masters. This easily led to African resistance against colonialism in Kenya that dated to 1921 under Harry Thuku. Ngugi says that in Thuku an “African working class, the new social force on the stage of Kenya’s history, and of which my father was part, had found its voice” (10). He emphasizes the fact that the fight for social and economic justice had started in Kenya many years before he was born. It is clear that most of these had happened before Ngugi was born and that is why he relies heavily on historical accounts from the formal school system.

Land alienation and the desire to own and work the land for livelihood is at the centre of Ngugi’s childhood autobiography. Ngugi witnesses his father lose his land that he bought traditionally by paying the seller, Njamba Kibuku, using goats because the money economy was non-existent. Later, Kibuku resold the same land to Lord Stanley Kahahu and his brother Edward Matumbi. They pay him in cash with a legal written colonial agreement. At the Native Tribunal Court where the case is heard, it was “the legal written word against oral testimony” (11). The question of land whips up a lot of emotions in the

autobiography much as it does in Ngugi's other writings like *Weep Not Child*, *The River Between*, and *A Grain of Wheat*. In *Ngugi wa Thiong'o*, Simon Gikandi says that land is a powerful discourse in Ngugi's writings. The Gikuyu had succeeded to transform the figure of their lost lands into the key for understanding their moral system and selfhood. Gikandi says:

When colonialism challenged the Gikuyu demand for tenure rights in the 1920s, it was not simply questioning their narratives of ownership and possession, but their notions of the past and the future; it was a threat to their emergent sense of self and a violation of the integrity of their social body. While the testimonies and representations which Gikuyu families presented were ostensibly about property rights and land tenure, they were ultimately about questions of historicity and identity (19).

This is the same view that Ngugi advances in *Dreams in a Time of War*. To him, the lives of the people are tied to land because land is closely connected to their being. The issue of class struggle was planted by the colonialists in the African society. Kibuku, like Jacobo in *Weep Not, Child*, benefits unfairly from the corrupt and skewed colonial justice system. Ngugi says:

Orality and tradition had lost to literacy and modernity. A title deed no matter how it was gotten trumped oral deeds. Kahahu emerged the rightful owner; my father retained a non-inheritable right of life occupancy on the compound where he had built the five huts. The victor immediately asserted his rights by denying my father access to grazing and cultivation on the rest of the land (11).

Ngugi also presents his suffering as a result of childhood sickness. He does not have proper medication because of his troubled eyesight. He cries a lot because his eyes swell and start running. His mother only affords to take him to a traditional healer as a result of poverty. Ngugi recalls the untold suffering he goes through in the hands of the ill-equipped and barely trained traditional doctor:

My mother used to take me to a traditional healer...The healer would make small razor incisions along the eyebrows above the swollen eyelids. He would bleed them and then rub some medicine on the cuts, and somehow I would feel better. But this well-being would last only a few weeks. I was in and out of the healer's shrine. I used to squint the better to see, and people teased me and called me Gacici, the little one who can barely see (28).

Ironically, Ngugi's mother depends on Lord Stanley Kahahu's charity to take her son to King George VI Hospital in Nairobi. Ngugi rides in a car for the first time with his mother on the way to "the big city" (29). This in a way inspires him because he learns how the privileged people led a life of ease. He looks forward to a time that he would be empowered so that he could help himself, his mother and siblings get better medication and the basics of a good life.

Ngugi was admitted for a long time at the hospital. Kahahu and his mother visit once. Later, his mother could not pay him another visit because Reverend Kahahu "had been very busy and kept postponing the day" (29). She finally comes on her own and Ngugi is discharged. On the way back, they get lost and they spend all the money. Through directions from well-wishers, they manage to get back home. This can be a memorable

experience and Ngugi does not forget it. As a result of sickness and poverty, Ngugi goes through experiences that are hard to forget. He also remembers the day he was caught by a barbed wire which inflicts a deep cut into his flesh. It swells and hurt so much that he cannot walk. He recalls the pain he endures because of lack of good medical facilities for the African people in colonial Kenya:

There were no medical clinics around and no doctor we could pay. My mother simply kept washing the wound with salt and water. Sometimes after weeks of my mother nursing my foot, I managed to begin walking again. An inch-long scar remains to this day (44).

In an effort to seek “a more manlier alternative”(32) to carrying loads other than on their heads and shoulders, Ngugi and his brother try to come up with a locally assembled carriage. They are embarrassed by the tag “mother's girls” (32) because they did chores that young daughters performed for their mothers. When the carriage proves hard to operate, Ngugi remembers how a boy named Gacigua offered to get a real second hand wheel from an old wheelbarrow at thirty cents. He says that because of poverty “even one cent was hard to come by” (32).

Ngugi and his brother are worried about performing feminine duties because the society was still traditional during his childhood. Duties were allocated along gender lines and therefore fetching water, firewood and preparing food were feminine roles. Boys were socialized to perform masculine roles like grazing of animals. In families where there were no daughters like in Ngugi’s case, boys had an obligation to carry out “girls’ roles.” This was an embarrassment to some of them in the eyes of the other boys who were lucky

to have sisters to do the chores. Ngugi does not like the idea that the same society that was supposed to nurture him in his growth now ridiculed him because of circumstances beyond his control.

Lack of money and other resources makes the young Ngugi try his hand at tea and pyrethrum picking with his elder brothers and sisters in the adjacent colonial tea and pyrethrum plantations. The experience becomes difficult and it brings him face to face with the colonial landlord and the African overseer who assigned rows to be picked. The overseers are harsh and hostile people that overwork them all day at the behest of the colonial landlords. Ngugi rejects this kind of economic exploitation by the colonial state. He re-echoes this concept later in his writings, for example, *Petals of Blood* where he castigates the economic exploitation of the African by the ruling elite after independence.

Attending school is not easy for Ngugi and the other children. He does not believe his ears when his mother asks him if he wants to go to school. Ngugi remembers how his desire to join school had always burnt in him through the example of his half-brother Kabae and his brother Wallace Mwangi. It was unfortunate that many of “them had, nevertheless, dropped out of school after a year or two because of the price of tuition” (36). Ngugi’s dream is to join school, beat all odds and excel in his studies to bring a permanent change to his life, his family and his society.

Formal schooling opened Ngugi’s eyes. He has his mother to thank for it because she sold her farm produce to pay tuition and buy school uniform for him. He is able to read and write for the first time. He is particularly fascinated by the Bible which he calls the magic book. Ngugi has trouble reading at night because of poverty. He is frustrated to

read by the light of an unreliable and coverless kerosene lantern. Many a time, there is no paraffin because paraffin meant money which was hard to come by. He struggles to read by firelight or simply waits to read during the day.

When reading for his Kenya African Primary Examination, he lacks paraffin and depends on unreliable firelight which was “a race to read as much as one could within the span of one set of flames” (137). Daylight is better but it competes with other daily chores that equally need a lot of attention. Despite all these odds like lack of adequate light, his mother’s struggles and doing household work, formal education is very important to Ngugi. It opens his eyes to realize his station in life as a child from a disadvantaged background and the need to succeed to make life better.

At one point Ngugi’s has sad memories when his father loses his herd to a strange disease. The animals would have been saved if there was no discrimination openly shown to the African farmers by colonial administrators. In fact there were “no veterinary services for African farmers at the time”. (57) Ngugi remembers this episode in which the man who had everything had now lost all when all of a sudden:

... disease struck. His goats and cows caught a strange illness. Their tummies puffed up, followed by diarrhoea and death. Traditional medical expertise was no match for the disease. There were no veterinary services for African farmers at the time. His animals died one by one (57).

After this sad experience, Ngugi’s father suddenly changes. The once “proud patriarch” (58) becomes a pale shadow of his former self. He starts drinking heavily around

people's houses and forcefully takes the little money that his daughters earned as casual workers from Lord Kahahu's pyrethrum farm or colonial tea plantations. Some of his daughters dodged him while others escaped into early marriage. Ngugi is depressed when his father demands to sell Ngugi's mother's harvest. His mother does not allow him to do this. Such bitter experiences in childhood remain engraved in one's memory forever. Ngugi recounts this unfortunate and sad episode that leads to the separation of his parents:

My mother, used to the independence of her household, firmly refused. One day, he came home, picked a quarrel with her, and started beating her up, even using one of the walking sticks that my half-sister Wabia used for support, till it broke into pieces. My brother and I were crying for him to stop. Mother was screaming in pain... my mother managed to slip away with only the clothes she wore, and fled to her father's house, my grandfather's, leaving behind her goats and harvest (55).

Ngugi castigates his father's action. Using a child's eye, he voices his sentiments clearly that the strong should not oppress the weak. He knows well that a strong family should have a mother and a father. Such a strong union should be based on mutual respect in order to bring up a steady family. Things get worse when his father later disowns them because of their mother's perceived "sins". His father even claims that Ngugi and his brother are not his children. The society of Ngugi's childhood was still patriarchal and men ruled their household with impunity. In these episodes, Ngugi wonders what had become of his father as to make such a dishonest claim:

My father suddenly turned up. He stood at a distance and beckoned my brother and me to accompany him. My father had never called me to him before, let alone come all the way to a field outside our homestead to do so. We ran to him...I want you to stop playing with my children. Go follow your mother, he said, pointing in the general direction of my grandfather's place. We did not have a chance to say farewell to the other children and tell them that we had been banished from their company and from the place that up to then defined our lives (61).

This incident is very memorable to Ngugi because of children's ability to store negative events up to adult life as seen in the theory of attachment by Chae, Goodman and Edelstein (2011). He is very bitter with his father's behaviour throughout the autobiography. He identifies himself emphatically as a product of a single parent. He does not pardon his father for abandoning them.

Ngugi does not come to terms with the way his father disowns them. He suffers psychologically because of the domestic violence and being away from home. It deepens his sense as an outsider, a feeling he harbours since he learned that "the land on which our homestead stood was not really ours" (62). Ngugi has the same feeling as an outsider at Kamandura and at Manguo "where it seemed that others belonged more than I did". (62) Thereafter, he says his mother lived in limbo, estranged from her husband's place and not quite accepted in her father's home. She tries odd jobs for a living which include working in Indian households at Limuru. Ngugi himself tries his hand at small business, odd jobs and catching moles to raise his school fees. With time, he almost becomes a beggar as he grows up in a single parent set up. The family lives without the basic

necessities of life. Ngugi remembers sadly how they had to scavenge for food to make a living:

The Manu bakery produced more loaves than there were buyers, and sometimes he was forced to throw away piles of unsold bread in different stages of fermentation and decay. When this happened, word would quickly spread and many people, adults, children, women and men would descend upon the piles, and in no time every bit of bread would be gone. Once this coincided with our job hunt. I found myself among a horde grabbing at discarded bread and brought some home in triumph (67).

This shows how poverty degrades the individual. It is interesting to note that what the Manu bakery discarded was “good enough” for Ngugi and his friends who shared the same circumstances. It is dehumanizing that he had to arrive home in triumph with discarded bread.

Ngugi also recalls a time he was forced to join seasonal labour while schooling at Manguo. Poverty seriously compromises his schooling as a student and dignity as a human being. Ngugi speaks fluently against family instability and how it affects the upbringing of children. He castigates such negative circumstances that affect his growth and advocates for stable families as the only way that normal child upbringing can be achieved.

3.3 School as a Memory Site

Discipline is strict and at most harsh for Ngugi and other students in his first years of learning at Kamandura and Manguo schools. Teachers at Manguo, for example, Morris Kihang'u, mete out corporal punishment at will. Ngugi testifies that Kihang'u was very unpopular because he was "prone to using the stick to impose discipline and attentiveness in the class" (73). The students are caned for minor offences or when they do not perform according to expectations in their academic work. Ngugi recalls some cases when this was done:

So every celebration of academic excellence was accompanied by laughter and tears, collective joy and grief. The pressure to do well must have produced the high degree of tolerance for corporal punishment, sometimes verging on abuse that was so common in Manguo. The aggrieved children had no sympathy from their parents. The teacher was always right; after all, he was the daily eye of the community in the classroom (76).

Interestingly, the pupils did not have any sympathy from their teachers and their parents. Ngugi does not support the use of corporal punishment as a correctional measure.

Ngugi also says that in his early schooling emphasis was on Western ideology instead of the African values. He claims that they were brainwashed in the colonial school because the emphasis was on white explorers like Livingstone, Stanley, Rebman and Krapf. The students learn in positive terms about the establishment of Christian missions that bring light to the people of Kenya. They are also told that White people had "discovered" Mount Kenya and many of the African lakes including Lake Victoria. Ngugi also

dismisses the notion that there had been tribal wars in Africa, which is not necessarily true, and the fallacy that White people brought “medicine, progress, peace” (104) to Africa and its people for the first time. To him African people lived in harmony with occasional conflicts. They also had their own medicinal remedies that worked for them before the coming of the Europeans.

Ngugi remembers how the colonial education authorities in the Kenya of his childhood misuse their powers. For example the colonial masters did the rounds to ensure compliance and see to it that the official government approved syllabus was taught in colonial schools. Ngugi remembers one colonial inspector of schools, a Mr. Doran, who visited schools unannounced. He intimidates teachers in and out of class in his usual itinerary round the schools in Kiambu. Ngugi recalls with pleasure how one Makerere University student teacher, Josphat Karanja, stands his ground and dares Mr. Doran to do anything to him in front of petrified members of staff and students. Though the students suffer under Mr. Karanja because of his love for the rod, Ngugi admires his courage and independence in the face of colonial aggression exemplified by Mr. Doran. To Ngugi, it is quite demeaning for teachers and other adults to keep running around like children simply because a white man had come calling.

The Europeans use the school system to entrench themselves in Kenya of Ngugi’s childhood. Ngugi recalls the life and practice in Kamandura, a *Kirore* School, where the African children are deliberately deprived useful knowledge. *Kirore* was the African Independent School which was not directly under the colonial school system. He is against the idea that they are trained to support the colonial state by being taught

carpentry, agriculture and basic literacy. He says that all the colonists wanted was skilled “African labour, not learned African minds” (72). These were conformist schools that took the literal view that the African mind is not well developed to absorb complex academic arguments. He sees this as a farce from a child’s point of view because he was progressing quite well in his academic work. To him, the African child’s mind was equally intellectually endowed like that of any other child in an organized school system. The situation is not very different in the *Karing’a* Schools. In moving from Kamandura, a *Kirore* school, to Manguo, a *Karing’a* school, Ngugi says he was ‘Crossing a great historic divide’ (72). To Ngugi, all the colonial schools, *Kirore*, *Karing’a* and the Kikuyu Independent Schools Association (KISA) were not adequately addressing the African educational needs. He dismisses all of them and chooses to live his dream of getting a good education that provided all children with equal opportunities.

More vagaries of colonialism were evident in Manguo School. Ngugi cites the example of African children deprived the use of their Gikuyu mother-tongue in preference of English by the colonial school system. The emphasis is on English as the only key to modernity. The children are tormented and traumatized by the disc which meant instant punishment. This was a piece of metal given to children for speaking their own language! They are consequently tongue lashed or physically punished for speaking in mother tongue. Ngugi’s ideas about the centrality of mother-tongue started a long time ago in his childhood.

In his collection of essays *Decolonizing the Mind*, Ngugi emphasizes the politics of language when he says that the choice of language and “use to which language is put is

central to a people's definition of themselves in relation to the entire universe" (4). Language was being used as a powerful tool of imperialism. In an autobiographical context, Ngugi therefore describes his childhood and growth in terms of a trajectory that moves from linguistic harmony with his Gikuyu community to a disjunctive relationship that had been firmly held by the colonial language. He says this of his school in *Dreams in a Time of War*:

The witch-hunt for those speaking African languages in the school compound began, the consequence rising to bodily punishment in some cases. A teacher would give a piece of metal to the first student he caught speaking an African language. The culprit would pass it to the next person who repeated the infraction. This would go on the whole day, and whoever was the last to have the metal in his possession would be beaten. Sometimes the metal was inscribed with demeaning words or phrases (110).

The colonial school system is also riddled with British texts that brainwashed the African children. Ngugi and his classmates read *Oxford Readers for Africa* in English classes that talk about John and Joan going to school in Reading by train. They travel with John and Joan to London where they see natural, historical and architectural landmarks like "the Thames, the British Houses of Parliament with Big Ben and Westminster Abbey" (135). This was very far from Ngugi's childhood and reality.

Schools followed the common colonial government syllabus for African schools and only sanctioned texts are allowed. Ngugi also reads Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*, Richard Doddridge Blackmore's *Lorna Doone* and Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure*

Island that have experiences from faraway lands. Texts in other subjects were virtually non-existent and the pupils depend on teachers notes for exams.

This is the issue that Ngugi raises in *Writers in Politics* where he considers the postcolonial society as woven into the social being of the formerly colonized body and mind. He suggests that education was more than a superstructural element of social production. From an early age therefore, Ngugi sees literature as occupying a special place in the education system. To him literature reflected the life of a people and so colonial books were meant to churn out apologias of colonialism. The teaching of African values in the colonial school system was unimaginable and this does not augur well with Ngugi. He sees the colonial school system as a deliberate attempt to trample on African values and replace them with Western values. He says:

Thus the teaching of only European literature, and mostly British imperialist literature in our schools, means that our students are daily being confronted with the European reflection of itself, the European image, in history. Our children are made to look, analyze and evaluate the world as made and seen by Europeans (36).

3.4 Kenya's Colonial History

Ngugi has relied heavily on Kenya's colonial history in his literary discourse. In *Ngugi's Novels and African History: Narrating the Nation*, James Ogude says that in recent times, Ngugi has actually argued for a radical reinterpretation of Kenya's history. He says that the thrust of Ngugi's argument is that Kenya's history has been distorted by colonial

writers and Kenya's professional and guild historians, trained and schooled in Western critical modes of thought. Ogude says:

At the heart of Ngugi's thesis is his contention that Kenya's working people, the workers and peasants, are marginalized, if not totally ignored, in the country's narrative history. Ngugi, therefore, seeks to intervene and to salvage the history of the subaltern from the ruins of colonial plunder (8).

Most of Ngugi wa Thiongo's writing and intellectual career is dedicated to telling the story of colonial history and historical injustices. The Mau Mau story which he captures in *Dreams in a Time of War* and other literary texts is about how the colonial enterprise thrived on repression and oppression. It is about the complex character of the British Empire and its vile techniques that enabled it to penetrate and create hegemony against the will of the African masses in Kenya. Ngugi speaks on behalf of many people who suffered death, pain, dispossession and destruction in the hands of the colonialists. In this way, Ngugi tells the narrative of the war of liberty; it is the story of the armed and unarmed struggles that he sees waged against the colonial forces in his childhood.

Other excesses of the colonial state that Ngugi remembers include arbitrary arrest, detention, mass evacuation of African people and even murder. This is because Ngugi's childhood was partly during the State of Emergency declared by the governor, Sir Evelyn Baring in 1952. It was difficult growing up in this era when almost everything African was criminalized. Ngugi writes about the massive show of authority by the colonial authorities around Limuru during this period:

Their local centre of visible power in our area was a Home Guard post built atop the highest ridge at Kamirithu. The most prominent feature of the post, really a fort, was a tall watch tower, guarded day and night by armed gunmen. Surrounding the fort was a dry moat into which wooden spikes were planted so that if anyone fell in them, he would be pierced fatally. The moat was reinforced by thick barbed wire....Home guards slept inside the camp. Functioning as a military command centre, a police precinct and a prison, the Home Guard post was a chamber of horrors (115).

Ngugi learns through the narrator Ngandi's voice that the colonial authorities were responsible for uprooting local Kikuyu population from their land. With their superior fire power the British created the first squatter problem in Kenya. The African had to move away to look for land and work to pay taxes. Large Kikuyu population moved to Rift Valley and part of Nyanza way back in 1902. Ngugi says that more land was taken from the Kikuyu during the world wars. Those who went to settle in faraway places were still considered dangerous. They were expelled a second time. For example those who settled in Ole Nguruone were evacuated and forcefully "placed in trucks, like cattle" (80) and they were brought and abandoned at Yatta Plateau in Eastern Kenya.

Ngugi has memories about some key events as a result of the state of emergency. One such case that shapes Ngugi's thinking and way of life was the arrest of Jomo Kenyatta and the others who comprised the famous Kapenguria Six, Achieng Oneko, Bildad Kaggia, Kung'u Karumba, Paul Ngei and Fred Kubai. Through the eloquent narration of Mzee Ngandi, Ngugi suffers in the tribulations of his people as a young boy. He

identifies with Kenyatta's defence team comprising of Fitz de Souza, Jaswant Singh, A. Kapila and Chaman Lall whom he sees as heroes in pursuit of social justice. There is a near idol-worship that Ngugi and the community have for Jomo Kenyatta as a true nationalist. His fame had spread as someone who had managed to understand, live and contest with the British Empire. Many hopes, aspirations and expectations were placed on Kenyatta's shoulders. He clearly understands that the struggle underway was a fight for justice and freedom for his people. Ngugi suffers internally when he says:

In time I came to share the same certainty: Kenyatta and the rest of the Kapenguria Six, as the defendants have been dubbed, shall win. So when on April 8, 1953, it emerges that Kenyatta and the others have been found guilty and sentenced to seven years of hard labour, my heart falls. What went wrong? (119).

The State of Emergency declared by the colonialists assumes frightening and deadly proportions. To Ngugi, the emergency "had acquired the dimensions of a huge mysterious creature, ever growing as it trod menacingly towards us" (127). In Nairobi the emergency is dubbed Operation Anvil by Governor Evelyn Baring and the ruthless General Erskine who seek to remove renegade Africans out of the city. It is no better in the rural area. Ngugi's elder brother Good Wallace is arrested on suspicion of having bullets and he flees for his life from the custody of an army truck into the mountains. This greatly affects Ngugi's growth and concentration at school. He has a bitter recollection of the emergency period:

It was clear that the constant daytime and night time raids were breaking up families, taking away or incapacitating breadwinners and diminishing parental

care. People lived under double fear: of government operations by day and Mau guerrilla activities by night, the difference being that while guerrillas were fighting for land and freedom, the colonial state was fighting to sustain foreign occupation and protect the prerogatives and wealth of European settlers (128).

Ngugi witnesses the harsh reality of the emergency first hand when one day he comes face to face with colonial injustice on his way back to school. The Johnnies, as the British army was reverently referred to, arrive in Limuru market and start firing indiscriminately at the crowd. His half-brother Gitogo is killed in cold blood because he is deaf and does not hear the White officer's orders. Although he moves on with life because a “human normalizes the unusual in order to survive” (130), the death of Gitogo affects Ngugi’s growth and development a great deal. Ngugi says:

Military vehicles, raids, screenings, screams, sirens from the Home Guard post, the sounds of machine-gun fire were becoming part of daily life. They made me feel that the slouching creature was inexorably closing in on my mother’s house (130).

Ngugi remembers the traumatic experience of growing up and going to school in the emergency years. There was a lot of unprecedented violence that characterized the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, social classes, families and institutions. Commenting on Ngugi’s emergency narratives in *Ngugi wa Thiong’o*, Simon Gikandi writes:

Later in his writing career, after reading Fanon's treatise on violence as a weapon of decolonization, Ngugi would come to interpret the state of emergency in Kenya as the highest point of African resistance against British imperialism. His main argument was that since colonialism had instituted violence as an instrument of conquest and rule, the colonized had no option to adopt it as the first step in "deciding to embody" history and thus break down the system of European rule (71).

The effects of the emergency now became part and parcel of Ngugi's life. The terror of the British war machine blends with Limuru's life day and night as the people are held hostage in their homes.

Ngugi's mother actually suffers a great deal because of the emergency too. The main crime is that her son Wallace had run away to join the freedom fighters in the mountains. She is questioned oftenly about *mbembe* or bullets and how they exchange hands. She is however firm in her denial of any involvement whenever she is summoned to the home guard post for grilling. Ngugi and the other children are traumatized by the harsh colonial system that had subjected them "to the same perpetual rhythm of tension bedevilling the entire population" (141). Such experiences of human suffering are hard to forget and Ngugi re-presents them quite graphically.

Ngugi undergoes more colonial terror when he and his friend Kenneth are cornered by white military officers when coming from a religious meeting. They had done nothing wrong when they come face to face with an officer in camouflage pointing a gun at them. It was a frightening experience; a case where Africans were rounded up for screening

without warning. He even gets blows from a white officer for forgetting to call him “*effendi*”, a reference that was reserved for the colonial military. Their lives are threatened by the officers simply because they are at the wrong place at the wrong time; a military jargon that was demeaning to the African people:

He motioned us to put our hands on top of our head and walk slowly to where the others were gathered. It was then that we saw ahead of us people sitting on their haunches, their hands behind their heads...on either side of forest I detected many more military personnel. Others guarded the sitted crowd with guns and an Alsatian dog... Kenneth and I had been caught in a notorious mass screening dragnet (146).

This incident was so traumatic to Ngugi and Kenneth. It was not lost on Ngugi that such was the life of many Africans in colonial Kenya. It was indelibly imprinted in Ngugi’s memory as a victim of colonial injustice. It is clear that such exposure to human cruelty has profound effect on one’s memory. Disturbances of memory are a cardinal symptom of post-traumatic disorders found equally in casualties of war and other forms of abuse like political oppression as in the case of Ngugi. Such memories can be accessed by writers in the form of nightmares, flashbacks and behaviours re-enactment which is very central in autobiographical writing.

What happens to Ngugi and Kenneth was nothing compared to what befalls his uncle Kimuchu and others at the height of the emergency. Terror strikes the region with many people being arbitrarily arrested and executed in cold blood. Ngugi remembers what happened and wonders aloud at the tyranny that was visited on the African people. He

asks what justice it was that left a trail of destruction, deaths and rendering young children orphaned without any reasonable provocation from the people. Ngugi sadly recounts what happens to Kimuchu and the others who are unlucky to be arrested on this day:

A white man, a British Officer, with a gang of African paramilitary, came for Kimuchu by night. His wife assumed that he had been arrested the way Kenyatta and others had been. But when she and other relatives inquired at police stations they got no news. After a few days what had happened became clear. Kimuchu, Njerandi, Elijah Karanja, Mwangi, Nehemiah, some of the most prominent men in Limuru all picked up the same night, had been summarily executed by the British officers at the wooded glen in Kinenii, a few yards from the road built by the Bonos. Ndung'u and Njoroge, Kimuchus' children by the first wife, Wangui had now lost both parents (100).

Ngugi is gripped with fear because Africans are guilty by association or simply through family and extended family relationship. He has a guilt-conscience because he is related to Good Wallace, who is considered a villain, fighting the colonial forces from the mountains. He fears that he can easily face the same fate because of his relationship with Wallace and Kimuchu. Ngugi has a strange feeling that his death is eminent when he recalls Kimuchu's fate. To him, the colonial forces do not value African life and such repression, should be resisted at all cost.

On passing the Kenya African Primary Examination, Ngugi is faced with the harsh reality of lack of tuition fees to join the prestigious Alliance High School. He occupies the

margin of poverty as a child of a peasant single mother and an absentee father. There is no money to buy uniform, shoes and other items. “This was the brute reality” (151) and he is further disturbed by rumours that some rich loyalist around Limuru wanted to stop him from proceeding to Alliance because of his poor background. The loyalist actually wanted to petition the colonial government to “prevent the brother of a Mau Mau guerrilla from going to search a prestigious high school” (151). Ironically it is a village government-appointed headman, Njairu, who marshals help and support for Ngugi to join high school through donations from relatives and well-wishers. Ngugi acknowledges the spirit of pooling together resources as an important step in helping the less fortunate in society.

The vagaries of colonialism follow Ngugi to the train station at Limuru as he departs for Alliance High School. A European railway official stops Ngugi from boarding the train to go to his new school. This was because he did not have a pass allowing him to move from Limuru to Kikuyu. The coaches are also clearly marked “for Europeans only,” “for Asians only” while the third class for Africans is not even marked. This was racial prejudice where the African had been relegated to a third class citizen in his own land. Ngugi recalls this sad incident that was aimed at reminding him about the oppressive colonial laws:

It is now my turn. The official stops me. Pass? What pass? He demands to see a pass that allows me to move from Limuru to Kikuyu only 12 miles away. It is a new law under the state of emergency. No member of the Gikuyu, Embu and Meru community can board the train without a government-issued pass (157).

In conclusion, the symbolic meaning of the incident above and the other colonial excesses were meant to intimidate the African people. For example, the European railway official generalizes all Africans whether young or old. By joining Alliance High School, the official was against the academic empowerment of Ngugi and by extension the African people.

3.5 Memories of Limuru

Memories of Ngugi's childhood in Limuru come to him vividly much later. The Limuru of his childhood was supposed to be a traditional African space. But this space had been invaded by the tyranny of colonialism and an unstable family. Ngugi remembers the two sides of Limuru comprising of the market centre and the nearby rural villages and the tea and pyrethrum plantations that surrounded it. The shops were clearly divided into the less affluent African shops and the more established Indian shops.

Ngugi remembers the Limuru Railway station offices and platform. As a child in primary school, Ngugi says that the train was a temptation that always challenged his commitment to school. It was a spectacle brought and used by European imperialists to conquer and colonize East Africa from Mombasa to Uganda and beyond. The train terrifies Ngugi's father and his uncle from the old stories he learns when it first descends on the African soil. The train was now a normal part of the Limuru and African landscape. Ngugi recalls how the lure of the Sunday passenger train tempts him and the other children around his home. He uses a picture of the railway station in the autobiography and says that it still remains as it was in his childhood days. The train meant a lot to Ngugi the child. It symbolizes his metaphorical dream journey to prosperity for his mother and his people. It

does not come as a surprise later when he takes the train to go and advance his studies at Alliance. He is very nostalgic about the train:

I had never been to the platform to witness the romance of the train, but of course we had heard many alluring stories about it. The passenger train was divided into sections...I longed to be there, to see it all for myself. And here, at long last, was a chance not simply to stand on a platform and stare at a passing train, but to become a passenger myself. Why should I let school and my pact with Mother stand in the way? (49).

The Europeans also use other forms of communication development to penetrate Limuru. Ngugi talks about the invasion of the African space through the building of the new road that passes through Limuru from Nairobi to Western Kenya. It leaves a permanent imprint in his mind. The colonialists pacification intentions are facilitated by a well-developed railway and road network. The road is built by the Bonos or Italian prisoners of war. The Bonos encourage business between them and the local people but they have their fair share in destabilizing the social order around Limuru. Ngugi says that the Bonos leave a memorable legacy as the new road goes past his Limuru home towards Rift Valley and Western Kenya:

But the Bonos left their architectural mark in the church they had built by the road on the edge of the Rift Valley in the hours of rest; and their sociological mark in broken families and fatherless brown babies born in several villages they had visited (24).

Ngugi remembers the Indian community that had come to live and trade in Limuru Town. He says the community kept to itself and connected to Africans and Whites only through its shops. Most of them are affluent merchants whose family life is in the backyard surrounded by high stone walls. There is less contact between Indian and African children because of the race and the economic divide. Ngugi remembers that the only Africans with a glimpse of Indian families are those that do odd jobs like cleaners and sweepers. He recalls an Indian boy attracted to the power of their locally assembled carriage enticing them with multicoloured marbles, candies and later dog puppies to be allowed to push it. Unlike the affluent Indian families, the African children are used to the low quality unprocessed sugar or jaggery candy known in the local language as *cukari wa nguru*. This is what Ngugi and the other children eat when they afford to buy the jaggery pieces. They consider themselves segregated even in their own familiar surroundings.

This narration shows that Ngugi's society was already divided into classes that live in mutual suspicion of each other. Ngugi feels that the whites and the Indians lived a life of privilege at the expense of the indigenous owners of the land. This can also be reflected in the children where the Indian children ate candies while the African children ate the low quality jaggery sugar. The white children were kept absolutely separate from the African and the Indian children in homes, schools and shopping centres because of the mutual suspicions that the races had for one another.

The other part of Limuru that Ngugi remembers well is the local village exemplified by his father's homestead before he was dispossessed by Lord Stanley Kahahu. His father

had established a clear patriarchy as the head of a polygamous family. Life in the village was traditional as compared to life in Limuru Township. Ngugi's home was like the many other traditional homesteads that dotted the Limuru of Ngugi's childhood. He recalls:

I had a vague early childhood recollection of his Kraal, a space surrounded by a fence of wood and an outer hedge of thorny bush, part of the homestead: images of his coming home in the evenings landing his enormous heard of cows into the vast Kraal, sometimes aided by the older sons, or one of his wives, and then, after securing the heard inside, he would go to his *thingira*, equidistant to those of his four wives. He was careful not to show any preference for any of his wives' huts (48-49).

In conclusion, Ngugi has very fond childhood memories of the people, Limuru town, his rural village and the environs. He is filled with nostalgia when he looks back at the old town, which has now been transformed, the train station, the old homestead, the new road and its builders. It is all these that make his childhood memories about Limuru complete.

3.6 Ngugi's Role Models

Ngugi remembers the heroes of Limuru and Kenya as a whole who inspire him to live his dreams. One of them is Mbiyu Koinange, a pioneer scholar in colonial Kenya. Koinange studied at Alliance High School, Virginia's Hampton Institute, Ohio Wesleyan College and later did his post-graduate studies, the first by a Kenyan, at Columbia University in the United States. He returned to the country and established the Kenya Teachers' College at Githunguri, a first by an African. Its aim was to produce "teachers who would

provide African children with unlimited, unbiased knowledge, enabling them to compete with the best that the government and missionary schools offered” (83). Ngugi has a dream of meeting Koinange because of his desire and effort of uplifting the educational and living standards of his people.

The other hero is Wallace Mwangi, Ngugi’s brother. Good Wallace was Ngugi's inspiration in terms of education. He watches Wallace read “all night with an open paraffin lantern, feet in a basin of cold water” (91) and vows to work equally hard. Wallace assumes legendary proportions when he evades colonial bullets to become a freedom fighter in the mountains. Wallace also sneaks back home to encourage Ngugi to put in more effort and pass well in his examinations. Indirectly Good Wallace's struggle for freedom in the forests encourages Ngugi's yearning for knowledge as an affront against colonialism.

Jomo Kenyatta also acts as Ngugi's childhood hero. Kenyatta's fight against colonialism had already been captured in Gikuyu folklore as told by Ngandi. Like Koinange, Kenyatta’s aim was to acquire formal education and learn the Whiteman’s ways. Ngugi is inspired by Kenyatta’s upward mobility in terms of education. Kenyatta beats all odds by studying at the Scotland Mission School at Thogoto before proceeding to the prestigious London School of Economics. Ngugi was determined to follow in Kenyatta’s footsteps to succeed in school and later in life.

Ngugi says that the arrest and detention of “Jomo Kenyatta may have been a blow to the public, but to me it was personal” (97). To Ngugi therefore, the “bosom friends” (86), Kenyatta and Koinange, were two of a kind in the pursuit of knowledge and the struggle

for freedom in Kenya. He makes them appear like mythic figures who held the light for him and for the people. The two had led the way and Ngugi wanted to follow in the steps in terms of education so that he could achieve his goals. He also views the two as leading figures in the emancipation of the Kenya from the yoke of colonialism.

Ngugi's mother is also a hero to him in many ways. Wanjiku is hardworking at home and in the fields. Ngugi's home is a place of plenty when the harvest is good due to his mother's efforts. She never gives up in challenging times and Ngugi admires her resilience against odds. Wanjiku at times fends for the family by doing menial jobs at the Indian neighbourhoods of Limuru. She inculcates the virtue of hard work in all her children. Ngugi particularly remembers his mother's independence of mind when she stops her husband from selling her farm produce irresponsibly. Not even the domestic violence he visits on her could make her change her mind. Instead, she prefers the life of a single parent at her father's home to the violence of the husband. The struggle that she goes through to raise her family is an inspiration to her son.

The society of Ngugi's childhood was still undergoing a transformation. Many aspects of life still remained traditional and the society was purely patriarchal. His mother's heroism is therefore seen when she rebels against this order and seeks to have an alternative voice at a time when such a thing was unheard of. She seeks empowerment as a single parent by taking her children to school. Ngugi in turn gives her a voice later in life through this autobiography and advocates for better family relations through dialogue. He castigates gender-based violence and emphasizes the fact that no one

should give in when their human rights are abused. Ngugi keeps the promise he had made to his mother to pursue education and succeed amid the challenges he faced.

Ngugi also remembers some of the teachers that taught him in the early years at Kinyogori, Kamandura and Manguo schools. They include Isaac Kuria who first registers him at school and Joana who helps him to read and write for the first time. Others were Fred Mbugua, who recognizes and appreciates Ngugi's writing skills by reading his essay "at assembly" (78) and Josephat Karanja who restores the pride of African teachers and students by refusing to be intimidated by a colonial school inspector. When the inspector comes to school one day, all the other teachers run towards him except Karanja. Ngugi admires Karanja's courage and reaction. Karanja's behaviour has an impact on Ngugi. He learns that education can actually free a person from any racial prejudice directed at him. From then onwards, he knew that all people were equal and Karanja's reaction to the bullish inspector makes him a hero in the eyes of many:

The inspector must have sent one of the teachers to ask Karanja to come to him. We sensed a drama in the making, and as Karanja left the room we stood on our desks and peered through the windows. The inspector was hopping mad, beckoning Karanja to run. We hoped that Karanja would be disciplined before all our eyes. But Karanja did not change his pace. Aware that many eyes were watching, the officer hung around for a minute or so and then got into his car and drove away...He was our hero. He had restored something we had lost, pride in our teachers, pride in ourselves (105).

The other teacher who contributes to Ngugi's intellectual growth is Samuel G. Kibicho, the English teacher. He is excellent in English grammar and he augments the English texts with everyday examples from the environment. Kibicho teaches Ngugi how to use "simple and complex sentences" (135) that remain in his mind for a long time. He also gives Ngugi literary texts from his personal library like the simplified versions of Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* and Richard Doddridge Blackmore's *Lorna Doone*. Ngugi remembers his teachers and school days at Kinyogori, Manguo and Kamandura with a lot of nostalgia. They prepare him for a future career as a writer.

Conclusion

Ngugi represents his childhood memory vividly in *Dreams in a Time of War*. He presents his childhood life as riddled with many challenges. These include family instability, struggles to acquire education, poverty, Mau Mau and Kenya's colonial history. The challenges do not bar him from achieving the best in terms of education. Ngugi also talks at length about Limuru town and its environs. Despite the life of deprivation that characterizes his childhood, Ngugi has some fond memories of the railway line, the train station and the old town which he presents vividly using real pictures.

Ngugi gives narrative space to the heroes that make a positive contribution in his life. In relaying his childhood experiences, he was operating in a society with many people. It is these heroes, among others, that shape him as a child and as a writer. He mentions their names as an acknowledgment of the monumental role that they play in shaping his dreams and also determining the destiny of his society. He, in a way, also wants us to identify with these heroes.

In conclusion, Ngugi's *Dreams in a Time of War* is not merely a chronology of childhood events. He livens up issues of concern in a manner that holds and grips the reader. He discusses issues of male patriarchy without mincing words, problems of single motherhood, multiculturalism, traditional values, Christianity, crossover between Mau Mau and Home guards in families and details of other personal stories of survival.

The next chapter deals with the aspects of style that Soyinka and Ngugi have employed in *Ake: The Years of Childhood* and *Dreams in a Time of War*.

CHAPTER FOUR

STYLE IN SOYINKA'S *AKE: THE YEARS OF CHILDHOOD* AND NGUGI'S

DREAMS IN A TIME OF WAR

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we shall examine the key aspects of style that Soyinka and Ngugi employed in telling their childhood experiences. Like other creative writers, autobiographers tell the stories of their lives using specific style. Henry Indangasi refers to this as literary competence which makes readers 'enjoy the aesthetic beauty of a literary composition' in the preface of *The Nairobi Journal of Literature*. He says that such competence enables readers of works of art to engage emotionally and intellectually with a literary work in order to appreciate its quality and be able to appraise its moral and spiritual values. In order to achieve their aim, autobiographers employ the use of such literary features like the literary titles, the narrative voice, characterization, plot, irony, allusion, symbols, imagery, word play and songs.

4.2 Choice of Autobiographical Titles

The first aspect of style that Soyinka and Ngugi use is the selection of the literary titles for their autobiographies. They choose titles that are as close to their childhood experiences as possible. The titles also capture the essence of the autobiographies in the sense that they are sufficiently descriptive of the contents of the works. *Ake: The Years of Childhood* is essentially a direct summary of Soyinka's upbringing as a child in the town of Ake. Ake is the place where he celebrates the discovery of his humanity. It is a vibrant society that shapes his perspectives of life as he mingles with other children and

the adult world. It is in *Ake* that the seed of formal education is sowed for Soyinka's future radical intellectualism.

Ngugi also chooses a suitable title in *Dreams in a Time of War*. The metaphor of dreams refers to Ngugi's quest for a more fulfilling life. His dreams are like one making a great journey of discovery about who he is and the potential in him. As a child, Ngugi dreams of getting a good education. He walks to school barefoot and goes without food as a result of poverty. He promises to work hard in school and through academic achievement, his station in life would change. Ngugi also dreams of freedom for his country from colonial rule. He is against the Whiteman's tyranny that dispossesses the African people. He dreams for a time when the Africans will reclaim their land and determine their own destiny.

Dreams in a Time of War also refers to the unique time in Ngugi's childhood. It partly covers the World War II period. Many Africans were forcefully recruited to fight for the Whiteman's cause which they had little knowledge about. Later the results saw the Mau Mau War of liberation that breaks out in Kenya. The conflict leads to a lot of suffering for Ngugi, his family and his people. Ngugi also fights his own personal wars like family instability, poverty, racism and dispossession that characterize his childhood.

4.3 The First Person Narrative Voice

The second aspect of style we will examine is the use of the first person narrative voice. The autobiographers tell their story using personal pronouns "I", "our" and "my" for instance, to show that the story is not an act of fiction. The characters in autobiographies are real people and the events they narrate are as truthful as much as possible to make

their work credible. Autobiographies are stories of what has already happened and the authors are remembering and then recounting them as individuals. Jeremy Hawthorn calls them stories of recollection in *Studying the Novel*. Soyinka makes use of the first person narrative voice effectively in *Ake: The Years of Childhood*. It is through the first person narrative voice that we see his childhood honesty and innocence while growing up in the town of Ake. He presents the story of his childhood so passionately by exploring his immediate environment including his family, the parsonage, the people, Ake Town and beyond. He is able to capture his surroundings perfectly as a child when he writes:

If I lay across the lawn before our house, face upwards to the sky, my head towards Bishops Court, each spread-out leg would point to the inner compounds of lower parsonage. Half of the Anglican Girls School occupied the lower spaces, the other half had the Bishops Court. The lower area contained the school's junior classrooms, a dormitory, a small fruit garden of pawpaws, guava, some bamboo and wild undergrowth...In the other lower compound was the mission bookseller, a shrivelled man with a serene wife on whose ample back we all, at one time or the other slept, or reviewed the world. His compound became a short cut to the road that lead to Ibara, Lafenwa or Igbein and its Grammar School over which Ransome-Kuti presided and lived with his family (4).

The first person narrative voice helps Soyinka to present to us what he witnessed first-hand. This gives the autobiography cohesion in what he narrates. He relies heavily on the recollections of his childhood memory in order to do this. He vividly remembers the influence of Christianity on his family, schooling and his early life. Soyinka freely talks

about the Vicar, Catechist, Bishop, Canon, Reverend and Wild Christian to demonstrate how far-reaching Christian influence had penetrated Ake. He also demonstrates the centrality of Western formal education in his life when he closely refers to Essay, Headmaster, books, classes, teachers and life at St. Peters and Abeokuta Grammar Schools.

Soyinka tells the story of his life at home with his family in detail to make his narrative authentic. He fondly remembers his relatives, his parents, Essay and Wild Christian, his brothers and sisters. He narrates about their likes and dislikes, outings to Ake and beyond, their clothes, food, sickness, visitors and outings to Essay's rural home at Isara. It is at Isara that Soyinka and his siblings appear alienated from their tribal customs because they speak the white man's tongue and know nothing about full prostration as a sign of respect before the elders.

Ngugi uses the first person narrative voice to recollect his childhood experiences in *Dreams in Time of War*. He freely talks about his dreams during the challenging times of colonialism and the World War II. He recalls his life of deprivation as he grows up in a polygamous home and later as a son of a single parent making his experience quite credible. He creates many characters that shape his views about life including his mother, Kabae, Harry Thuku, Jesse Owens, Jomo Kenyatta, Marcus Garvey, Mahatma Gandhi and Mbiyu Koinange.

Ngugi also narrates the role played by his siblings in his growth. He fondly talks about Good Wallace and his struggle as a Mau Mau fighter, Njinju, Ngugi's follower, Wabia the wonderful story teller, Gathoni, Njoki and Gitogo. Ngugi also creates characters that

are villains like Ragae the village headman and the Lord Stanley Kahahu who is a representation of the new capitalist order that was emerging to replace the white colonialists. Ngugi remembers the effect that literacy and the church have on him when he learns to read and write as a result of attending Kinyogori and Kamandura schools.

I read the Old Testament everywhere at any time of day and night, after I have finished my chores. The biblical characters become my companions. Some stories are terrifying, like that of Cain killing his brother Abel.... Years later I would completely identify with the lines of the spiritual: Little David play on your harp. But David the harpist, the poet, the singer is also a warrior who can handle slingshots at Goliath. He, the victor over giants, is like a trickster Hare, in the stories told at Wangari's, who could always outsmart stronger brutes (40-41).

The use of the first person narrative voice by Soyinka and Ngugi is very significant. The autobiographies are stories of the individual writers told in a simple way from a child's perspective. Childhood life is presented in its concrete form as much as possible. The "I" narrator therefore gives the writers and an assertive autobiographical presence therefore giving them a strong self-identity.

Ngugi uses a second first person narrative voice in the name of Mzee Ngandi. In *The Child Narrator: George Lamming's in the Castle of My Skin*, Jennifer Muchiri says that writers at times use other narrative voices alongside the first person narrative voice. This is because the autobiographer realizes the limitations of their own voice in passing some information. She says:

The presence of other characters who provide information is the author's way of counteracting the possible narrowness of the perspective of a first person narrator. He also tries to counteract the limitations of the first person narrator by employing a lot of dialogue in the narrative, thus allowing the character to talk for themselves. (40)

Ngandi is an orator around Limuru who is well briefed about the struggle for freedom from colonialism. He is also aware of the main players in the struggle for freedom like the Kapenguria Six. Ngugi paraphrases Ngandi's speeches to a crowd that gathers at the Limuru shopping centre. Ngandi manages to replace people's gloom and despair with "a glow of hope" (119). Ngugi uses Ngandi as a parallel narrative voice alongside his voice to provide information that he is not able to give. Ngandi is older and more experienced. He says:

But Ngandi is not daunted. Listen to Kenyatta's words in the court. "Our activities have been against injustice suffered by the African people...what we have done and shall continue to do is to demand the rights of the African people as human beings that may enjoy the facilities and privileges in the same way as other people". Do you think he was just talking to prosecutor Somerhough and Judge Thacker? What would be the point? His words are a signal to Mbiyu and Kimathi to continue to intensify the struggle (119-120).

The second first person narrative voice is very important. This is because Ngugi himself had not lived Ngandi's experiences. Ngandi is an old man and therefore more informed than Ngugi the child. Ngugi learns from the old man's knowledge and oratory skills.

Ngandi's lessons in the history of the struggle also play a critical role in shaping Ngugi as he yearns to realize his dreams in life. Ngandi is an artist whom Okot p'Bitek calls sages that are produced by societies at a given time. In *Artist the Ruler*, Okot says:

I believe that a thought system of a people is created by the most powerful, sensitive, and imaginative minds that that society has produced: these are the few men and women, the supreme artists, the imaginative creators of their time, who form the consciousness of their time (39).

Soyinka also uses the complimentary voices of other people like his father, Doudu, his mother and the colonial DO to add more information to his autobiography.

4.4 Use of Oral Narratives

The two autobiographers also use oral tradition like narratives to link their childhood stories. Oral narratives have several roles which include informing, educating and entertaining. They are part and parcel of a child's growth in the world. Very important lessons and social values are passed from one generation to the next through such oral narratives. Children were trained to remember such lessons and social values by re-telling the stories themselves as part of their upbringing. In *Oral Literature of the Kalenjin*, Ciarunji Chesaina says that:

Since oral narratives are derived from the day-to-day experience of a community, the thematic content usually reflects the world view of that particular community.

Our view of perceiving and interpreting the world around us in turn influences the

type of stories we tell to educate the youth about culture in which they are growing (20).

In *Ake: The Years of Childhood* Soyinka and his siblings gather around the eloquent Osiki to listen to his oral stories. The narratives, like the one about the *egungun*, are interactive and open Soyinka's mind to the myths of the unknown in the Yoruba world. One such story involves Osiki, Soyinka and his mother. Osiki tells them that myths in the African world, especially those involving *egungun*, were distinctly different from the European myths. Soyinka is for instance surprised to learn from Osiki that the Yoruba *egungun* could not speak or understand English. In his essay "Soyinka as a literary Critic" James Gibbs and Bernth Lindfors *Research on Wole Soyinka*, Obiajuru Maduakor says that Soyinka's critical preoccupation is his fascination with myth as a phenomenon that exercises an unlimited appeal for the human imagination, "Manifesting itself in literature, culture, folklore, and the world view of a people" (265).

Ngugi also uses oral narratives to narrate his childhood story in *Dreams in a Time of War*. He tells one such narrative, a parable that he had read in a prized book, *Beloved of the People*, by Justus Itotia. He receives the book from Ngandi, the great orator, who has a great influence on his life. In the parable, a man lends another his cows to herd while he is away. One cow that is spotted gives birth at the same time as the herdsman's brown cow. Since the spotted cow yields more milk, the headman exchanges the calves. When the owner returns, he cannot believe that that his spotted cow had given birth to a brown calf. Not even the elders could solve the problem. It is a young boy who solves the puzzle when he hides in a hole covered with a huge rock to secretly listen to the two parties. The

culprit turns himself in by uttering words to the effect that he had exchanged the calves as the boy listened. The two men are supposed to move the heavy rock as they utter some words.

The entire village court then moves and sits around the rock to determine the case. The hidden voice from the rock, like that of an oracle, tells the court what the men had said. Through these the culprit gives himself in. This narrative passes an important message how justice was administered in the traditional Kikuyu society through a well-defined system. The moral of the story is that it is wrong to be a liar and people should not jealously claim what is not rightfully theirs.

Ngugi also paraphrases some of the narratives told around the evening fire and sometimes in the women's huts. This is because children were brought up by the mothers in traditional Kikuyu society. The mother's house was the centre of interest where food was prepared and children always retreated there for warmth and comfort. This is the reason why many childhood autobiographies from Africa like *Dreams in a Time of War* and *Ake: The Years of Childhood* always foreground a strong mother-figure like Ngugi's and Soyinka's mothers.

The oral narratives contain the philosophy and idiom of the society. Ngugi recalls the childhood stories told by wonderful orators like his sister, Wabia. He fondly remembers the story of a blacksmith who goes to smithy far away and leaves his pregnant wife at the mercy of an ogre. The ogre eats up all her food when she delivers. It is a pigeon, fed on castor oil seeds, that delivers a message to the man far away about the danger that looms

at home. The blacksmith secretly comes back, kills the ogre and is happily re-united with his wife and family.

The other story that is popular with the children which Ngugi re-tells is about a sick man in pursuit of a cure. The man's wound is incurable and he sets out to look for a medicine man who could heal him. He only knows the man's name as Ndiro but he did not know the way to his home. The sick man only describes the medicine man to strangers in terms of his gait, dancing steps, and the rhythmic jingles around his ankles that sound his name, Ndiro. The children enjoy joining in with the story teller as he/she steps on the ground calling out "Ndiro!" Many of the stories inculcated virtues like justice, fairness and courage in the children. The use of oral narratives by Ngugi and Soyinka inform, entertain and educate the readers about their respective societies and the important role they play in upbringing.

4.5 Use of Songs

The other aspect of oral tradition that the autobiographers employ is the use of songs. Songs and narratives were part and parcel of the traditional African society. There were songs that accompanied virtually all ceremonies in the African society like harvest, child naming, circumcision and war. Many of the songs dealt with intimate and personal human experiences hence making the autobiographers to remember them. The songs echo the voices of the Yoruba people for Soyinka and the Gikuyu people for Ngugi. They also mirror the people's collective past.

Like oral narratives, songs entertain, inform and educate. Chesaina (1991) says that songs "are used as a means of expressing the people's world view and maintaining a cultural

direction through transmitting the society's values and attitudes." (25) The poetic and rhyming nature of the songs breaks the monotony of the prose style that characterizes the autobiographies. Many of the songs in Soyinka's *Ake: The Years of Childhood* are in Yoruba language and Soyinka offers their translations in the form of footnotes below the pages where they appear. Soyinka remembers hearing one such song sang every morning even before he joined school. He could hear the children singing in groups of five to six as they marched and danced to the tune which echoes the importance of protecting and providing for children whatever the circumstances:

B'ina njo maje'ko

B'ole nja, ma je'ko

Eni ebi npa, omo wi ti re. (22-23)

If the house is on fire, I must eat

If the house is being robbed, I must eat

The child who is hungry, let him speak. (23)

Soyinka recalls how he used to sing whenever he was sent for an errand along Dayisi's promenade. He sings to scare the spirits in the darkness and the dangers they pose including dark figures drifting by, spirits and even imaginary kidnappers. He sings in English ferociously to scare the spirits that could not converse in the language that he had learnt at St. Peters. He sings along the way:

For I'm a magician

You all must know

You'll hear about me whenever you go

You can see my name in letters large
You can see me perform for poultry large
For Anthony Peter Zachary White
Is a man who always gives delight...
My friends I bid you come and see
What sort of Wizard I may be
Come out and all
And join the crowd
And lift your voices in praise loud... (150).

This song shows that Soyinka's child innocence was at crossroad. He is torn between Yoruba world and the new dispensation of colonial education. The song gives him courage to go through the darkness because, to him, Yoruba spirits never understood the English language.

Song and dance also form part of Ngugi's world in *Dreams in a Time of War*. It is a momentous time in the history of the Gikuyu with the struggle for independence, new religion and formal schooling. All these aspects of life had songs composed about them in one way or the other. Ngugi acknowledges that music cut across all facets of life during his growth as a child:

Music at Kamandura accompanied religious ceremony, prayer mostly; at Manguo music was incorporated in everything, secular and religious. Even the sports festival had choirs who marked the intermissions, an alternative to the marching

band. Performances, including music and dance were part of the year end school assemblies (77).

As a young boy, Ngugi recalls hearing the lines of a song that emphasized the centrality of land to the Gikuyu people. The lines were part of a book, the Gikuyu primer that Ngugi reads at school. The words of the song are so beautiful that they remain engraved in his memory particularly, the choric melody. Ngugi says he could “hear the music” (40) even when not reading the book. The song went like this:

God has given the Agikuyu a beautiful country
Abundant in water, food and luscious bush
The Agikuyu should praise the Lord all the time
For he has ever been generous to them. (40)

This song shows that Ngugi strongly believes in its message. If God had given the Agikuyu a land of plenty, then many of the challenges that he faced as a child were man-made. If he believed in the words of the song as a child, then he re-echoes the message as an adult writer. This is the reason why Ngugi identifies with the Mau Mau struggle whose aim was to liberate African land from the colonialists. He is also against the emergence of the land grabbing African elite like Lord Stanley Kahahu who dispossesses his father of his land.

The songs had varied themes that also went with the times. With the coming of change through formal education, Ngugi remembers songs that come up to emphasize this great

shift. He gives the lines of one such song in italicized Gikuyu language so that the flavour and authenticity is not lost to those who understand it:

Korwo ni Ndemi na Mathathi

Baba ndagwitia kirugu

Njoke ngwitie itimu na ng'ombe

Riu baba, ngugwitia githomo

Ndegwa riu gutituire

Thenge riu no iranyihanyiha

Ndiri kirugu ngugwitia

Riu baba, ngugwitia githomo (77).

If this were the time of our ancestors Ndemi and Mathathi

My father, I would ask for the feast due to initiates,

Then I would ask you to arm me with a spear and cattle

But today, Father, I ask you for education only

Our herd of bulls is gone

Our he-goats depleted

I will not ask you for a banquet

My father, all I ask for is education (78).

The songs that Soyinka and Ngugi use in the autobiographies clearly show that the writers are products of the societies of their time. From the lines of this song, it is also clear that this society was at the precipice of change because it addresses some

contemporary issues like the importance of formal education. They also carried the Yoruba's and Kikuyu people's values. They use the songs as a strategy to connect the ideas in the stories of their lives and enhance cohesion. They remember the songs in their oral forms before writing them down the way they were sang. In most cases, the writers also offer translations to help pass the same message to a wider audience.

4.6 Use of Yoruba and Gikuyu Words

Soyinka and Ngugi also use Yoruba and Gikuyu words as a form of style. They blend the stories of their lives with some words from their Yoruba and Gikuyu mother tongues respectively. To Soyinka and Ngugi, mother tongue was the language of the environment which they acquire first. Some of the ideas and concepts they highlight are best remembered and articulated in the first language. A child usually expresses the self better in a language they are competent in before they learn English or any other second language. The Kenya and Nigeria of Ngugi and Soyinka's childhood were still widely oral societies.

In *Ake: The Years of Childhood*, Soyinka uses Yoruba words whose meaning can be deduced from the context. The words are in italics and he at times uses footnotes to explain or translate some of them into English. For example, he talks about the *egungun* or ancestral spirit, and the *oro* which is a tree daemon and *Ogun*, the god who manifests himself in several ways. Soyinka also talks about Abiku whom he refers to as "the child who dies and returns again and again to plague the mother" in *Idanre and Other Poems*. (28). In "Histories of Errancy: Oral Yoruba Abiku Texts and Sonyinka's "Abiku," Douglas McCabe says that one of Soyinka's playmates as a young boy was also an

Abiku, and he tells us in his autobiography *Ake: The Years of Childhood* that she was characterized by her strange rebellion against parental authority.

Soyinka has always had an interest in the culture of his people which includes language, dialogue, goals chant like rhythms, proverbs, praise name epithets, myths, superstitions and beliefs. *Ekuru, Akara, Chin-chin, Moin-moin, Iyan* and *Saara* are types of food and a *dansiki* refers to a free flowing robe. Soyinka uses Yoruba language in direct speech in between English indirect speech. An example is what happens when Soyinka and his siblings go visiting their rural home at Isara:

We entered, the Odemo hoisted me on his knees and asked me a number of questions about school. The usual cries went up “A-ah omo Soyinka, wa nube wa gbowo” and they stretched out their hands... What is this Omo tani? (127).

Ngugi uses Gikuyu words freely in between English speech in *Dreams in a Time of War*. This makes his childhood narrative to sound more authentic as the Gikuyu language is his first language. In her book *Ngugi wa Thiongo: A Documentary Sourcebook*, Carol Sicherman says that Ngugi freely utilizes phrases and passages in Gikuyu to “refer constantly to incidents and names from Kenyan history and politics.” (111) Unlike Soyinka who uses footnotes to explain his Yoruba words, Ngugi writes the words in italics and explains them in parentheses. He uses such words as *thingira*, the father's house, *ahoi*, a dispossessed African farmer, *muthuu*, a boys only dance and *igogo* the crow.

Ngugi also uses Gikuyu phrases like *Mau Mau irothii na miri ya mikongoe*. This roughly means ‘let it disappear under the roots of mikongoe trees’ *maitu mukuuru* or elder mother, *maitu munyinyi* or younger mother, *cukari wa nguru* or unprocessed jaggery sugar and *mwendwo ni iri na iriri*, a book known as *Beloved of the People*. Ngugi writes songs in Gikuyu language and offers a translation for better understanding and appreciation by non-Gikuyu readers. This ensures that he is as close to his childhood memory and reality as possible:

Njamba iria nene Kenyatta

Riu ni oimire Ruraya

Jomo ni oimite na thome

Ningi Jomo muthigani witu

Kenyatta our great hero

Has now returned from Europe

He came back through the main gate (Mombasa)

Jomo has been our eyes (85).

The song shows that the Kikuyu people held Kenyatta in very high esteem. They celebrated him in stories, song and dance with a hope that he held the key to the country’s future liberation from colonialism.

4.7 Use of Dialogue

Soyinka and Ngugi make use of dialogue in their childhood autobiographies. There is a lot of child talk between the boys and girls at Ake town and Limuru bringing the readers closer and closer to the reality of their time. There is also the interaction between the

children and their parents and older generation including teachers, relatives and friends. Dialogue is immediate and it blends well with the long autobiographical storylines of the authors. Soyinka clearly marks dialogue in his work with inverted commas to distinguish it from the prose that he predominantly uses in *Ake: The years of Childhood*. An example of this can be seen when Wild Christian talks to her children and when teachers at AGS and St. Peters address the pupils. There is also a lot of childhood dialogue between the boys and girls in school as they play and go through their daily chores.

Ngugi also uses a lot of dialogue in *Dreams in a Time of War*. When Ngugi and his friend Kenneth are arrested in a sudden mass screening exercise, the tyranny of the colonial regime is visited on them. He uses dialogue to show this tyranny. The dialogue is put in double inverted commas to mark it out from the rest of the prose in indirect speech thus:

My tormentor spoke with the hooded man for a while. Then he came back to me.

“Do you have any brothers not at home?”

Butterflies in my tummy. Shall I tell a lie? I decided to stall to buy time.

“I beg your pardon, effendi! What did you say?”

“Have you got brothers not at home?”

There was no point in stalling or telling a lie. I would tell a truthful lie and stick to it.

“I have one who is not there, effendi.”

“His name?”

“Wallace Mwangi.”

“Effendi!”

“Effendi!”

“Where is he?” (149).

In some cases Ngugi uses unconventional dialogue which is not set off by inverted commas. This is embedded direct speech which is used in-between the narration. Ngugi uses this form of style and his childhood voice is clearly re-created making his life story very real. In one such case, he uses embedded direct speech in a case where some children involved in child labour at the Kahahu farm get very hungry and they are tempted to steal plums rather than work on an empty stomach. Ngugi does not join them because his “mother would kill me for stealing.” (108) Kahahu’s wife, Lillian, discovers this and decides to generalize all the poor children as thieves and denies them their wages earned from picking pyrethrum flowers for her.

Ngugi protests:

The unfairness of it cuts deeply into me. I step forward. I raise my voice. All eyes are on me! You cannot do this: It is not right, I find myself telling her. She recovers from the shock. Yes, I shall, unless the culprits give themselves up, she says coolly. And you call yourself a Christian? I ask. All mouths fall open, Lillian, the wife of Lord Reverend Stanley Kahahu, the manager of the estate, has never been challenged by any of her workers. She hires and fires at will. But I know that everyone present knows that I am right. Still no other voice joins in expressing discontent. Your Christianity is without meaning, I say and leave the scene tears of anger and frustration streaming down my face (108).

The use of narratives, songs, dialogue, Gikuyu words and Yoruba words is important because it shows some kind of interface between orality and the written word in Ngugi and Soyinka's autobiographies.

In conclusion, autobiographers make use of literary style to tell the stories of their life. They use words creatively to present their experiences to readers. Style is what makes an author's writings unique because of their expressive capacity to realize aesthetic effect. Aspects of style also help the autobiographical form to have cohesion whereby the patterns of one's life are chronologically presented. Any autobiography that does not employ the use of style will not be interesting to read because it will be a long boring epithet. Literary style therefore enables writers to render their autobiographies in a more interesting version.

Conclusion

This project sought to evaluate the role of the environment in the growth of a child. The facts of life of early childhood play a major role in the establishment of a writer later in life. The autobiographies reveal that adult writers can actually represent their childhood in a clear way because the most successful autobiographies are about one's growth. In addition to this, the study noted that the optimal fulfilment of unique potential of the child and his/her emergence as a social competent adult are critically influenced by what happens to them in childhood.

The project was structured in three sections. The first section captures Soyinka's house of privilege, his role models and excesses in colonial Nigeria. Soyinka grows up in a stable family with a comfortable home. All the provisions including food, clothing, shelter,

love, school fees and electricity are provided. Soyinka's role models like his parents, Beere and Doadu help shape his early thinking in life. The colonial excesses including the forceful conscription to fight in the World War II, racial discrimination and denying women the right to assembly and freedom of speech go a long way in giving Soyinka a voice to write and also to speak.

The second part deals with the various sites that Ngugi wa Thiongo uses to represent his childhood memory. These include his family, Kenya's colonial history, formal education and the use of real pictures. Ngugi is a product of a single parent having been disowned by his father whom he does not forgive. He struggles with the basics of life and he clearly lacks enough food, good shelter, school fees, clothing and love. These memories of great struggle and pain are engraved in his mind. Ngugi endures a life of difficulty as a child, his mother struggles to bring up her family and the children have to do odd jobs to earn money barely for survival. Ngugi's story is also about the colonial excesses that he witnesses in Kenya. The Europeans grab all the arable African land around Limuru and central Kenya. They segregate the African people at work, in towns, hospitals, schools and trains. The people who took up arms to agitate for freedom and independence were arrested, tortured, jailed or even killed.

The colonial governor also declares a state of emergency in Kenya in which Africans in Kenya are arrested and detained at will. Early, able men were rounded up and forced to serve in the World War II to fight for a cause they did not understand. Amidst all these, there are men and women who stand out as Ngugi's role models. They include his mother, Wanjiku wa Ngugi, Mumbi wa Mberu, Dedan Kimathi, Harry Thuku, Mbiyu

Koinange, Jomo Kenyatta, Mahatma Gandhi, Wallace Mwangi and Mzee Ngandi. His memories of Limuru are quite vivid and complete with old and recent photos of places and things that have changed and things that remain the same.

The last part of this research deals with the style that the two writers use in their autobiographies. We looked at the autobiographical narrative voice and how effectively it is used in the two texts. The first person 'I' emphasizes the idea of truth in autobiographical forms. What is echoed in the texts is actually what the writers stand for as individuals and as writers. Other aspects of style that make the works authentic include the use of selected songs, oral narratives and words in the Gikuyu language for Ngugi and Yoruba language for Soyinka. The autobiographers' choice of titles for their works is also unique to their childhood experiences. We also analysed the use of dialogue in the works that helps to bring the experiences as close to the reality of childhood time as possible. The use of literary style is what makes *Dreams in a Time of War* and *Ake: The Years of Childhood* qualify as literary texts.

Research Findings

The research found out that autobiographical memory can be represented in a number of ways. The first one is the use of past experiences as a point of reference in solving problems. What happened in the past can be used to guide people's actions in the present and future through the representation of childhood memories as in the case of Ngugi and Soyinka. Autobiographers remember rewards and losses to create successful models or schemas of behaviours to confront related or new challenges. Secondly, out of autobiographical memory develops and maintains social bonds. Sharing of personal

childhood memories with others facilitates social interaction because such reminiscences strengthen pre-existing bonds. Thirdly, writers use autobiographical memory to create and maintain a coherent self-identity over time. A stable self-identity allows for evaluation of past experiences which in turn leads to self-growth.

The study also found out that the source of remembered memory is attributed to personal childhood experiences. The source of narratives that Soyinka and Ngugi write in their autobiographies is what they lived and experienced as children growing up in colonial Nigeria and colonial Kenya respectively. When they write as adult authors their perspective of childhood experiences does not change as this is not affected by memory age. The experiences narrated also have a bearing on the emotionality of the children and the emotionality of the people around them.

Another finding of this study is that the environment plays a critical role in representing childhood memory. Children do not grow up in a vacuum. Childhood memory is rife with accounts of the physical environment like rivers, villages, hills, mountains animals and vegetation. The people around the children also operate within this environment which will greatly influence the children's growth. The children also manipulate their immediate environment for survival.

Areas for Further Research

This study dealt with the representation of childhood memory by two male writers from East Africa and West Africa respectively. We suggest that a future study should be done on childhood memory of female writers from other parts of Africa including Francophone and Lusophone countries. Boys and girls in African set-ups go through different and

sometimes similar experiences in the socialization process. Such a study will therefore widen the scope of childhood memory and the way it is represented by adult female writers.

WORKS CITED

- Abbs, Peter. *Autobiography in Education*. London: Heinemann, 1974.
- Asego, Nicholas Oluoch. "Form in Yusuf Dawood's Autobiographical Works: *Behind the Mask, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* and *Nothing but the Truth*." Unpublished MA Thesis University of Nairobi, 2007.
- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Hellen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Bartlett, Fredrick. *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology*. Cambridge, CUP 1932.
- Benson, Janette. *Advances in Child Development and Behaviour* Vol.40. Burlington Academic Press, NY 2011.
- Berryman, Charles "Critical Mirrors: Theories of Autobiography." www.questa.com/library/journal/1G1-54482283/critica-mirrors-theories-of-autobiography
- Bressler, Charles E. *Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice*. New Jersey: Pearson, 2007.
- Carkonen, Shawn. 'Aaaa' <http://www.goodread.com/book/show2567.AK>
- Chae Yoojin et al "Autobiographical Memory Development from an attachment perspective: The special Role of Negative Events." University of California. 2011.
- Chesaina, Ciarunji. *Oral Literature of the Kalenjin*. Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya, 1991.
- Denzin, Norman K. *Interpretative Biography*. London: Sage Publications, 1989.
- Fanon , Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press, 1967.
- _____. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Constance Farrington (trans) New York: Grove, 1968.
- Gibbs, James and Lindfors, Bernth. *Research on Wole Soyinka* (ed). Treton, NJ: World Press, Inc. 1993.
- Gikandi, Simon. *Ngugi wa Thiong'o*. New York: CUP, 2000.
- Hawthorn, Jeremy. *Studying the Novel*. New Delhi: Universal Books Stall, 1971.

- Hassan Mahat Issack. "Style in Barack Obama's *Dreams from my Father*." Unpublished MA Thesis University of Nairobi, 2010.
- Indangasi, Henry. *Stylistics*. University of Nairobi Press, Nairobi 1988.
- Indangasi, Henry. "The Autobiographical Impulses in African and African American Literature. The Americas Before and After Columbus": *The Third East African Studies*. Eds. Godfrey Okoth and Patrick Kakwenzire. Kampala, USIS. 1993.
- Kiminyo, Daniel M. *Child Development*. KLB: Nairobi, 1995.
- Laye, Camara. *The African Child*. Nairobi: East Africa Educational Publishers, 2004.
- Lamming, George. *Pleasures of Exile*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1991.
- Lazarus, Neil, ed. 'Introducing Post-Colonial Studies', *The Cambridge Companion to Post Colonial Studies*. Cambridge: CUP, 2004.
- Lindeborg, Ruth. "It's This Guerilla Warfare." The Nature and Strategies of the Political subject in Wole Soyinka's Ake in *Research in African Literatures*, Vol.21 Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990.
- McCabe Douglas. "Histories of Errancy: Oral Yoruba Abiku Texts and Soyinka's "Abiku." <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/ral/summary/v33/33.1mccable.html>
- Mandela, Nelson. *Long Walk to Freedom*. London: Abacus, 1994.
- Mandela, Winnie. *Part of My Soul*. London: Penguin, 1984.
- Marcus, Laura. *Autobiographical Discourses: Theory, Criticism, Practice*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001.
- Mphahlele, Ezekiel. *Down Second Avenue*. London: Heinemann, 1967.
- Muchiri, Jennifer. *The Child Narrator: George Lamming's in the Castle of my Skin*. Leipzig: VDM Verlag Dr. Muller, 2010.
- Muchiri, Jennifer. *The Female Autobiography Voices from Independent Kenya*. Leipzig: VDM Verlag Dr. Muller, 2010.
- Mukutu, Elizabeth. "A Critique of Friendship Across Race and Tribe in two Kenyan Novels." Unpublished MA Thesis, UoN, 2010.
- Ngugi wa Thiong'o. *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir*. Nairobi: Kenway Publications, 2010.

- _____ *Weep Not, Child*, London: Heinemann, 1964.
- _____ *Writers in Politics*, London: Heinemann, 1981.
- _____ *Decolonizing the Mind*, London: Heinemann, 1986.
- Njagi Edith. *Child Growth and Development*. Nairobi: Longhorn, 2009.
- Obama, Barrack. *Dreams From My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2004.
- Ogude, James. *Ngugi's Novels and African History: Narrating the Nation*. London: Pluto Press, 1999.
- Olney, James. *Tell Me Africa: An Approach to African Literature*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973.
- Omuteche, Jairus Mwenje. "Mediated Plot in the Construct of the Theme of Struggle in Nelson Mandela's Autobiography: *Long Walk to Freedom*." Unpublished MA Thesis, UoN, 2004.
- Pascal, Roy. *Design and Truth in Autobiography*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960.
- Peterson, Linda H. *Victorian Autobiography: The Tradition of Self-Interpretation*. New Heaven: Yale C.U.P., 1986.
- Richards, Ivor Armstrong. *Principles of Literary Criticism*. London: Routledge and Kenan Paul, 2001.
- Rose, Michael, Schryer, Emily. "What Everyone Knows about Aging and Remembering Aint Necessarily so". Sage Handbook of Applied Memory by T. Perfect and S. Lindsay(Eds)
- Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Vintage, 1994.
- _____ *Orientalism*. London: Penguin Classics, 2003.
- Sicherman, Carol. Ngugi wa Thiong'o: A documentary sourcebook.
http://scholarcommons.sc.edu/engl_facpub
- Siundu, Godwin. 'Soyinka Turns Glorious 80.' Saturday Nation. July 12th 2014
- Soyinka, Wole. *Ake: The Years of Childhood*. New York: Random House, 1981.
- Soyinka, Wole. *Idanre and Other Poems*. New York: Methuen, 1974.

Soyinka, Wole. *Myth, Literature and the African World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965.

The Nairobi Journal of Literature No. 6 *Form and Style in Literature* Department of Literature University of Nairobi 2010.

Tilak, Raghukul. *History and Principles of Literary Criticism*. New Delhi: Rama Brothers, 1972.

Wanjau, Esther Gathoni. "The Portrayal of Nelson Mandela in his Autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom* and in Winnie Mandela's *Part of My Soul*." Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Nairobi 2008.

Welleck, Rene and Warren Austin. *The Theory of Literature*. New York: Harcourt/Harvest, 1959.