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## **Anthropocentric Urbanity in Ngugi's *Matigari*: Implications for Environmental Discourses in Africa**

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### **Abstract**

This study examines the factors responsible for environmental exploitation in Ngugi wa Thiongo's *Matigari*. Ecocriticism from the standpoint of Lawrence Buell's position is used as theoretical framework in this study because it centres on anthropocentric attitudes that are considered inimical for the environment while the interpretive design is adopted for critical analysis. Ngugi's *Matigari* is selected because it reflects on ecological concerns and depicts the motif of exploited urbanity and environmental frictions. Through Ngugi's *Matigari*, the reader is shown the intricacies and conspiracies that create socio-ecological imbalances in the society. There is a sharp environmental contrast between the exploiters and the exploited which foregrounds the significance and urgency of Ngugi's intervention. Conspiracies between the privileged locals and the settlers distort and violate environmental harmony in a way that provokes tension inimical to ecological regeneration and social tranquility. The text studied submits that environmental rot is largely man-made. In the novel, Ngugi cautions against activities that are inimical to environmental purity and harmony. **Key words:** Ngugi wa Thiong'o, novels, exploitation, ecocriticism, Ecological violations, African novel, *Matigari*.

## Introduction

Literature has been used largely to convey the totality of people's social, political and economic existence especially in Africa. African literature is deeply concerned with the survival of the people and the attendant struggles that have conditioned man's survival. In this regard, literature reflects and refracts on the issue of socio-ecological harmony of the environment and landscape for the advancement of man. Without being in harmonious relationship with the environment, man's survival will continue to be a mirage. In the words of Joyce Agofure (2016:1), "postulations on ecological and literary discourse have emphasized that nature is endangered and the exploitation of natural resources for the free market globally contributes to the destruction of the natural world especially of periphery nations". This very factor has been grossly responsible for the environmental degradation and socio-ecological problems facing African countries. It also varies from region to region and nation to nation given their ecological peculiarities. The problems range from disappearance of biodiversity, erosion, global warming, depletion of the ozone layer, desertification and deforestation, flooding waste, oil pollution and spillage to the abrogation of land by agents of imperialism. In this regard, the culture of people is derived from the process of constantly fighting their natural and social environment Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1993: 27).

According to Dustin Crowley (2013), "the literary discipline itself has long assumed a sort of geographic vision through its structuration into nationalist/regionalist categories..." (4). This validates the point that literature is mainly produced to capture the exigencies of the historical and social life of a people. Environment has therefore, remained one of the central

concerns of the social and economic life of Africans. Without environmental harmony, it will be difficult to sustain a robust economic life of the society. It is worthy to note that whatever affects the environment positively or negatively impacts directly or indirectly on the people.

Cheryll Glotfelty states that (1996: xix), one of the major proponents of ecocriticism, "natural disasters have not only compelled human societies to re-appraise the significance of nature for human survival but also led to the realization that any harmful human action against nature (environment) will yield destructive consequences for humanity" (xix). The seemingly imbalances in the ecosystem have provided serious environmental concerns in the world and Kenya, in particular. Writers have deployed literature to investigate and examine these concerns which have constantly threatened the harmonious existence of mankind. These concerns have therefore given literary production a new focus and outlook. Ecocriticism brings to the fore the environment and its ecological concerns by rendering an account of the indebtedness of culture to nature. It is pertinent to note that ecocritics, while acknowledging the role of language and literature in shaping our view of the world, they also seek to restore a connection between actuality and representation in literary texts. Specifically, their concern is to revalue the more-than-human natural world and accommodate non-human objects, which some texts and cultural traditions invite us to look into. In this way, ecocriticism has a vital contribution to make to the wider project of environmental studies, which Laurence Coupe states that (2000;5), "debate nature in order to defend nature". For many ecocritics, the defence of nature is vitally interconnected with the pursuit of social justice which many critics have termed "environmental justice". Ecocritics

are increasingly becoming many and varied in their approaches, drawing on a wide range of analytical strategies and theoretical frameworks and addressing a diversity of cultural, phenomenal and historical exigencies. Glotfelty further defines it as the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centred approach to literary studies (1996: xviii). In addition, she states that despite the broad scope of inquiry and disparate levels of sophistication, all ecological criticism shares the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it; that our metaphor of land influences the way we treat it (1996: xvii). Ecocriticism takes as its subject the “interconnections between nature and culture”. Given its critical stance, it has one foot in literature and the other on land. As a theoretical discourse, it negotiates between the human and nonhuman. Relying further on Glotfelty’s opinion; most ecocritical works share a common motivation: the troubling awareness that we have reached the age of environmental limits, a time when the consequences of human actions are damaging the planet’s basic support system of life. This awareness sparks a sincere desire to contribute to environmental restoration, not just in our spare time, but from within our capacity as literary scholars. According to Donald Worster (1994);

We are facing a global crisis today not because of how ecosystems function but rather because of how our ethical systems function.

Getting through the crisis requires understanding our impact on nature as precisely as possible, but even more, it requires understanding those ethical systems and using that understanding to reform them. Historians, along with literary scholars, anthropologists, and philosophers, cannot do the reforming of course, but they can help with the understanding (27).

The above shows that the environmental problem the world is facing is as a result of both the actions and inactions of human beings. This has brought serious consequences to the management of environmental crisis as there seems to be abuse of ethical conducts and processes. What is prevalent today is nature fighting back the abuse and exploitation of ethical values. Calling people’s attentions to these various abuses and violations of ecosystem should be the major focus of ecocritics.

Furthermore, William Rueckert (1996:107), defines ecocriticism as “the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature, because ecology (as a science, as a discipline, as the basis of human vision) has the greatest relevance to the present and future of the world” It can be inferred from this context that the possible relations between literature and nature are studied in terms of ecological concepts.

## Research Problem

Environmental, ecological, social, political, economic and literary discourses across Africa and particularly Kenya have stressed the fact that nature has become seriously endangered, and its continued exploitation for the free market globally contributes to the environmental wreckage the under-developed countries are experiencing. From the explanation given thus far, this study fixes its argument on the fact that literature is used as a lethal weapon to express the disenchantment of Kenyans to the violation of their environmental purity by the imperial powers and their collaborating African agents. Literature has also been clearly a veritable tool in amplifying the evil done to Kenyan landmass which is allegedly seen as being responsible for the dwarfed development of the social, political and economic life of the country. The study upholds the view that Kenyan literature particularly Ngugi's is largely produced to resist these environmental violations which are regarded as proofs of the British conquest. The study also demonstrates that Kenya is enmeshed in the dangers of exploitation, destruction and mismanagement of its lands and natural resources by the forces that have held the country down. By this approach, the research delves into the frontiers of ecological crisis in one of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's novels. Ecocriticism is used to investigate Ngugi's *Matigari* as a resistance to the various forms of environmental crises in Kenya. The text examined validates the fact that socio-ecological issues in Kenya have been largely responsible for the political, social and economic imbalances of the Kenyan marginalized and exploited people. This scenario has therefore defined the Kenyan social dialectics and dynamics. Though many writers from Kenya have written extensively on socio-ecological issues, for instance, Wangari Maathai (Nobel Peace Prize Winner), Ngugi can be considered as

one of the frontline writers, whose works are regarded as all-encompassing and representative of Kenyan national life.

This work to a great extent is restrained to unearthing the relationship that exists between literature and society and how their interactions have contributed to eco-social discourse. The massive environmental degradation and exploitation of Kenyan land, natural and human resources for the benefit of the imperial agents and their indigenous collaborators have brought untold hardships to the majority of the people. This research is therefore undertaken to establish how this exploitation is captured, portrayed, and expressed in Ngugi's *Matigari*. The study also validates the ecological imbalances in Kenyan society and the roles literature has played in fighting these perceived environmental injustices. It equally further amplifies the correlation between literature and environmental discourse in its concerns with environmental injustice which are largely responsible for the underdevelopments in Kenya. It also establishes the potency of ecocriticism in the evaluation of environmental discourse in African literature.

This study is significant in the sense that it amplifies the understanding of the roles of literature in foregrounding the environmental injustices and exploitation through the instrument of ecocritical theory. This approach demonstrates and validates the fact that Ngugi's work provides lethal weapons in cushioning the extent of the devastation that might have occurred as a result of activities of the exploitation of human and non-human resources in Kenya. As a core Marxist writer, Ngugi foregrounds the dialectics that have defined Kenya both historically and materially and concludes that environmental rot is man-made and mass actions are needed for the restoration of ecological purity. One of the core issues is

the betrayal and the conspiracies of the settlers and the privileged locals on the issues of land. Ngugi who is among the foremost writers in Kenya occupies a very vantage and dominant position in the interpretation of ecological matters in Kenya. He is one of the Kenyan and African writers who has seen it all and therefore can be regarded as an authority on Kenyan environmental discourse. Apart from his writings, Ngugi also has a personal experience on the imbalances of land management issues in Kenya which amplifies the authority of his narratives.

The research undertakes a detailed analysis of Ngugi's *Matigari*. It is pertinent to note that land and eco-social politics are the most central issues in the historical development of Kenya, and no discourse and narrative is complete without them (Veit P, 2019:2). It is therefore safe to posit that socio-political and economy issues and politics in Kenya are centred on land and the control of environmental resources. The text is therefore, selected because it captures the eco-social and environmental issues in Kenya and the attendant crisis. It is also anchored on the fact that Ngugi's writings reflect and refract largely on the resistance and counter resistance that have defined the Kenyan land struggle and the quest for environmental justice and purity. Ngugi's choice is anchored on the fact that he best captures the ecological issue the study is undertaken to explore. Ngugi's works convey the thematic concern and the principles of ecocriticism this study is all about, which is the exploration of ecological and environmental degradation of urban cities and crisis in Kenya and the various ways it is encountered in the novel.

The research uses the descriptive interpretative design which explores the subject matter under discussion by

analyzing and interpreting data through the employment of words and concepts. It therefore entails a critical and an in-depth detailed analytical investigation of the primary data in Ngugi's *Matigari*. The study also employs ecocriticism as its theoretical and analytical framework.

### Review of Related Literature

In what is regarded as a very significant and wide-ranging survey of pastoralism in American literary criticism, Lawrence Buell (1995) explores the experience of American pastoralists in a variety of issues and contexts to include social, political, gender-based aesthetic pragmatic and environmental discourse. He pays greater attention to the emergent threat of ecological holocaust, and sees environmental pressures that come with the importance of pastoralism as a literary and cultural force in the future. Buell in his seminal book, *The Environmental Imagination* (1995), submits that the study "must be conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis" (12). His work is regarded as very primary to ecocriticism. Buell's ecocritical approach can be seen in his outstanding work on Henry David Thoreau, which interprets Thoreau's nature writing and the formation of American culture.

Timothy Morton in his book, *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (2007) complements Buell's work by focusing his discussion on the nature of nature in ecocriticism. Morton documents the changing definition of the word "nature" and echoing Buell to a certain extent, suggests that nature can be anything. Similar to Gotfelty, Richard Kerridge in, *Writing the Environment: Ecocriticism and Literature* (1998) notes that:

Ecocritics want to track environmental ideas and representations wherever they appear, to see more clearly a debate which seems to be taking place, often part-concealed in a great many cultural spaces. Most of all, ecocriticism seeks to evaluate texts and ideas in terms of their coherence and usefulness as responses to environmental crisis (5).

The whole idea of Kerridge's submission is for ecocritics to come together and harmonize the various cultural divergences and differences that create volatile environment for humanity. This is considering the fact that environmental crisis brought about by violation and exploitation of ecosystem is a global issue and there should be concerted efforts by writers to combat it.

Glen A. Love (2003), while attempting to answer a question on what human nature has to do with ecocriticism submits that;

At the beginning of the third millennium and of new century often heralded as the century of the environment, a coherent and broadly based

Love avers that "human behavior is not an empty vessel whose only input will be that, provided by culture, but is strongly influenced by genetic orientations that underlie and modify, or are modified by cultural influences" (3). In *Practical Ecocriticism, Literature, Biology and the Environment* (2003), Love clearly outlines the issues the two cultures face together. He posits that a great deal of world literature deals with the pastoral and with the relationship between human and non-human beings. According to him, ecocritics are simply trying to read literature with a fresh sensitivity to the emergent voice of nature. Inevitably this "voice" can only be expressed, in literature at least through representations of both human and non-human creatures and their interactions with landscapes.

movement embracing literary environmental interconnections, commonly termed 'ecocriticism' is emerging.... Ecocriticism, unlike all other forms of literary inquiry, encompasses non-human as well as human contexts and considerations. On this claim, ecocriticism bases its challenge to much postmodern critical discourse as well as to the critical systems of the past (3).

David Mazel (1996) opines in *The Ecocriticism Reader* that ecocriticism is the analysis of literature using various strategies and theories, to him this create a kind of authority that will safeguard the environment from violations;

...our reading of environmental literature should help us realize that the concerns are not exclusively of the order of "shall these trees be cut? Or shall this river be dammed?" As important as such questions are, but

also of the order of, “what has counted as the environment, and what may count? Who marks off the conceptual boundaries, and under what authority, and for what reasons? Have those boundaries and that authority been contested, and if so, by whom? With what success and by virtue of what strategies of resistance?” these

are the level on which I would like to see ecocriticism theorize the environment (143).

Mazel comes close to involving the activities of man and the authority he carries in determining the extent of environmental violations. Though Mazel is of the opinion that such authority should be contested if environmental peace is to be achieved, he comes short of the direction of such resistance and its impacts on eco-social and economic implications.

### Textual Analysis

*Matigari* to a certain extent can be regarded as Ngugi’s first real attempt at correcting, fighting and resisting the ecological and various eco-social and political imbalances in his society. The novel is Ngugi’s attempt at bringing to fore African cultural values which are technically connected to sections of lands that have been taken away by the imperial agents. So, in the new Kenyan society according to Ngugi, there should be many Matigaris (eco-activists ready to reclaim and safeguard the environment from violations) who will monitor the turn of events and wait for an opportune moment to give, fight back and restore the land, Kenyan resources and environmental justice to the people. To Ngugi, the era of docility is over and the peasants should demand the restoration of their lands and cultural values.

The central thrust of *Matigari* is the right of the growers to enjoy the fruits and the resources of the land instead of the settlers who have become masters. When the workers and peasants come to the realization that they are being exploited,

they begin to resist and wage war against their oppressors. Having realized that the “...sun was just rising, but the land was covered with fog” (3), the peasants and workers led by Matigari begin to assert the right of those who sow to enjoy the benefits of their labour and to end the oppression that hinders such enjoyment. The oppressor here is not a white settler alone but the Kenyan who represents western capitalism and its exploitive packages. This realization makes Matigari to drop his arms and embrace peaceful solution to end the oppression of his people and restore the land to them, “it is good that I have now laid down my arms... now girded myself with a belt of peace. I shall go back to my house and rebuild my home” (5). With this resolution, he comes out of the forest which had hitherto protected him. Coming out of the forest is to validate the fact that the people are out for dialogue and peaceful solutions to the eco-social impasse. However, Matigari ultimately rejects any route to liberation and the restoration of land without an armed uprising. The oppressors and the settlers cannot be driven by words alone but by armed words. No matter how credible and

sound the argument seems to be Ngugi takes an increasingly uncompromising stance in the quest to take the land and its resources back.

Matigari seems to concern himself with oppression faced by the peasants and workers. He resolutely feels that those who sow are alone qualified to enjoy the full use of the benefits and fruits of their labour. To the tillers of the land and the owners of the lands, independence is nothing but a mirage because their sufferings just got multiplied and the hopes of land restoration completely dashed. Their labour is like nectar in a sieve. The non-colonial Kenyan people are ecologically exploited. After fighting the colonial rule in the forest, Matigari comes back to discover that injustice and oppression still exists in different ways in the realms of eco-social order. Despite his earlier resolve to put on a belt of peace, he decides to go back to the forest and fight for the restoration of environmental justice of his fellow Kenyans. This is as a result of what he comes to understand as what is going on since his return to build his home (Kenya). To his utter amazement each child;

... had to pay a fee to enter. A ticket to enable them fight it out with dogs, vultures, rats, all sorts of scavengers and vermin, for pieces of strings, patches of cloth, odd bits of leather, shoe, soles, rubber bands, threads, rotten tomatoes, sugarcane chaff, banana pads, bones... anything (11)!

Matigari is shocked to see how the children of Kenya and animals scrambled for the rubbish from the market and the factories. To him, this is not only environmental disaster; it is also humanitarian degradation and crisis. Having witnessed the deaths and sufferings of Kenyans during the invasion of the imperialists and the violation of environmental purity,

...his thoughts now turned to the railway and the tunnel. He shivered. How many lives had been claimed by the railway and the tunnel at the time they were built? He remembered the explosions of dynamite and the screams of the workers whenever the walls caved in often burying them alive. And the groans, as some were flattened by the rollers, came back to him so vividly... the blood curdling cries of the dying... swallowing up the tea-leaves, the coffee, the cotton, the sisal, the wheat. In fact, all the produce from all the land that settler William and his like had stolen from the people (8).



These memories above coupled with what he is seeing provoke him into action with “armed words” otherwise the land and its resources will not be restored to the people. Matigari’s resolve is predicated on the fact that the Kenyans who are supposed to distribute food and produce from the land, market and factories among themselves have become terribly selfish that they even prefer to share the waste with animals and children at a cost. This is unacceptable to Matigari.

The pain of Matigari and by extension Ngugi himself is such that the black exploiters have become more brutal than the White settlers. He becomes very critical of the evidence of the pact they (the Whites and their local agents) entered with one another to perpetually subjugate the natives. After independence, the local agents modified the pact which made them become worse than the Whites in the violation of the land and the dispossession of its resources.

One of the greatest challenges of education in Kenya is that instead of using it as an avenue to reclaim the land for the people, the educated class only appropriates the land for themselves. This point is raised earlier and in so doing, they perpetuate the ecological disaster brought about by the rampaging imperialists. This is the main worry and concern for Ngugi in his ecologically-driven thematic thrust. Ngugi shows how the early pro-western education and religious natives in an attempt to prove how good Christians they are and how valuable western education is, have tried to suppress ruthlessly their own native customs than even the settlers have done. For instance, in *The River Between*, a particular set of people, mainly the natives who accept the new religion on the pretext of sustaining their native traditions exploit the unsuspecting public for their selfish ends thereby violating the sanctity of the land.

In *Weep Not, Child*, Jacobo attempts to subdue Ngotho brutally and hinders the early attempts of the black natives to get back their occupied lands. The cruel ways of the *askaris* (home guards) during the emergent era of Mau Mau to subdue the natives are depicted clearly in *Weep Not, Child*, *A Grain of Wheat*, *Petals of Blood*, and *Devil on the Cross*. This is similar to *Matigari*, which mainly deals with the Kenyan elite who has mastered the settlers’ ways of defrauding the people of their lands and environmental resources. Ngugi’s focus on *Matigari* is to depict the suffering, struggle and the revolt of Kenyans against ecological exploitation and deprivation, both in the hands of White settlers and their native collaborators who have reduced the independence gains of the people to what they can find from refuse dumpsites. “Yes...these are our gains, the things we found in the pit” (13). It is shocking to still find out that the people are not even allowed the good things they get from the dumpsite as they are deprived of them, “when they see that we’ve found things like shoes, belts, pieces of leathers or cloth in good condition, they pretend to get angry, and they growl at us” (13). “They” here stands for the agents of the oppressive and depraved class while “us” are the children who represent the deprived Kenyans. It is shocking to Ngugi that children in his native Kenya, metaphorically pay to enter garbage sites to scavenge for rubbish instead of enjoying the produce which the fertility of their land offers. Passivity has taken a better advantage of the people, when Matigari comes to the rescue to save his scattered and deprived children, having spent his life in the struggle with the settlers (imperialists) in “the forests, mountains, valleys, ditches, caves, plains, rivers, hills, all over the country” (15). This portrays the fact that the settlers spare nowhere in Kenyan environment and resources in the course of the plundering.

The only place left for the poor Kenyan is in “the vehicle cemetery ...scrap yard where cars of all makes are heaped... A scrap-yard, no a grave yard for motor vehicles... others had grass growing inside them. That is our village” (15-16). This is an environmental disaster which constitutes Ngugi’s pain and concern that the settlers have taken all the resources of his people, thereby reducing the people to sub-humans. To Ngugi, the “children would come out of this graveyard into which their lives had been condemned... build their lives anew in the unity of their common sweat” (16). With this resolve, Ngugi seems to suggest in *Matigari* that “a new heaven on a new earth” (16) is possible for his people not on a platter of sweet words but on the potency of “armed words.” This is so because the fire of freedom has ecological backing as it “first lit in the forest and mountains” (20), which protected the fighters during the uprising to save the land. The motivation for *Matigari* is derived from the fact that he and his children have the right to enjoy the fruits of their labour having produced everything that the settlers are enjoying. Also, the fact that he knows the settlers’ secrets is an added motivation to fight for the restoration of the land and resources:

I built the house  
and with my  
hands. But  
settler Williams  
slept in it and I  
would sleep  
outside on the  
veranda. I tended  
the estates... But  
it was settler  
Williams who  
took home the  
harvest... I  
worked all the  
machines and in  
all the industries  
but it was settler  
Williams who  
would take the  
profits to the

bank... I  
produced  
everything on  
that farm with  
my own labour.  
But all the gains  
went to settler  
Williams... (21).

This is basically what provokes the narrative shift of Ngugi in this resistance novel in which he questions the rationale behind the activities of the settler and demands ecological justice for his people; “...one morning I woke up from deep sleep of many years and I said to him: Settler Williams, you who eat what another has sown, hear now the sound of the trumpet and the sound of the horn of justice... the tiller demands his land...” (21-22). This is a biblical allusion to the prophesied second coming of Jesus to give justice to mankind to reclaim the glory of God and establish the Kingdom of God. Likewise, *Matigari* is poised to restore the purity of the land and environmental justice, and save his people from further humiliation and deprivation in the hands of the settlers.

The role of women is also brought to the fore by Ngugi in *Matigari* with Guthera’s experience as a saint turned prostitute and the plight of other women as a result of land alienation: “Today there is no corner of the land where you’ll not find women for something with which to quell the hunger of their children and husbands... most of the women are casual labourers in the tea, coffee and sisal plantations” (39).

From the foregoing, Ngugi is able to sustain the consequences of land alienation on the women and children of Kenya in almost all his novels. The Natives are not only dispossessed of their lands but the lands are converted to foreigners’ use without any benefits to the natives or owners of the land, “so fertile, this land!... Does all this land belong to one person? Yes... or foreign companies” (41). The

vastness of the plantation makes them wonder if it actually belongs to one person and for a whole day, they are walking and seem lost inside the plantation; "... they decided to walk down between the rows of the tea-bushes... they walked and walked and walked down the slope, but they were still nowhere near the end of the estate. One ridge simply gave way to the next" (41).

Though Ngugi seems to have braced up for the consequences of his literary action, he is of the opinion that it is high time people demanded the restoration of the land to the rightful owners through revolutionary means. His main character in *Matigari* braces up to undertake the act of restoring the land and its resources to the ancestral owners. He says, "The builder demands back his house, and the tiller his land... For, from this day on, the builder refuses to beg for a place where he can lay his head; the tiller refuses to starve..." (46). From the decision of *Matigari* to reclaim the land and its resources to the owners, Ngugi seems to have set the stage for confrontation with the settlers which is not likely to be a tea party. This is a significant departure from the beginning of his narratives where most of his characters are indifferent to real resistance against land alienation.

*Matigari* therefore, begins his real questioning of the deprivation of his people's resources and environmental justice by asserting that "...the land belongs to the tiller and not to parasites

I will not produce food  
for him-who-reaps-where-he-never-sowed to feed him  
in it  
while I go to sleep on an empty belly... (97-98)

With this song in mind, Ngugi argues that the imperial tradition is maintained by the international bourgeoisie using the multinational and the local compradors. The economic and political reliance of the

and foreigners! Therefore, the tiller must reap what he sows" (63). With this, Ngugi sounds a revolutionary warning to the violators of Kenya's ecosystem. Using ecological metaphors to drive his point, he also calls on the people not to relent thus; "...farmer whose seeds have not germinated does not give up planting" (64). Therefore, a person who seeks environmental justice is never tired of the search until he finds it. He is strongly of the opinion that the products of "our labour should go back to us who produce the wealth of this country" (74). This suggests that Ngugi's concern is centred on the restoration of the land and its allied resources to the people. He considers armed resistance as the only option for lifting the Kenyans out of poverty and slavery on their own land. The search for ecological justice and truth which is the major concern of Ngugi in *Matigari* is to be looked into with ecological consciousness: "... in the grass in the bushes. He searched among the thorns, in the shrubs, the ditches and the molehills, and in bud nests. He searches for them in the whole nature" (86). This brings the ecological angle to resolving the land alienation of the Kenyans.

As the resistance culture grows which arises from the awareness *Matigari* is creating, reasons are adduced why the settlers should not be allowed to enjoy the sweat and the land resources of the people. Songs of resistance are composed by *Matigari* to awaken the weakened spirit of the Kenyans:

African neo-colonial business class is reflected in its culture of parrotry as portrayed in *Matigari*. This is brutally enforced on restive Kenyans through police boots, barbed wire, a compromised

clergy and corrupt judiciary, as echoed strongly by Matigari thus:

The house is mine because I built it. The land is mine too because I tilled it with these hands. The industries are mine because my labour built and worked them. I shall never stop struggling for all the products of my sweat. I shed blood and I did not shed it in vain. One day the land will return to the tiller, and the wealth of our land to those who produce it. Poverty and sorrow shall be banished from our land (124).

This is a demonstration of the fact that the end of poverty and sorrow of the Kenyan people is connected and tied to the restoration of the land and its resources hence, the demand for environmental justice by Matigari. He resolves that in the pursuit of the restoration of his people's land neither arms nor words alone can restore the environmental justice but "one had to be armed with armed words" (31) to make it possible. The resistance tradition is being carried out by the army of informed workers assisted by patriotic students and other progressive individuals of the middle class though with some level of passivity. This resistance is reflected in their patriotic defence and protection of even Kenyan animals in the forest that form parts of the land resources. Even during dire needs and at the verge of starvation the animals are protected; this is so

because killing of animals is violating the purity of the environment and the ecological resources, as animals are part of their restoration struggle:

... animals are man's friends? When we were in the forest, we never killed any animal at any cost unless we were and had run out of food. Even when we came across an injured animal, we would mend their broken limbs. Animals were very useful to us... if you stay in the forests and mountains for a long time; you get to learn how to talk to them. Sometimes, the animals talk to you. You just remain silent, listening to them (143).

The above suggests that even animals are against the dispossession of the land by settlers hence, their cooperation with the fighters for the restoration of land to the dispossessed. This amplifies the fact that the culture of resistance pervades and arouses the feelings of both human and non-human objects in Kenya.

### Conclusion

Having got to the full consequences of land alienation there is a need therefore, to rebuild, though belatedly the devastated and violated environment. This is the thrust of Ngugi's environmental concern in which he has consistently maintained that serious and concerted efforts are required

from the people in order to clear the rot that has befallen the land. He points out that there can never be meaningful development in Kenya (and by extension Africa) until it is decontaminated – freed from environmental pollution and social injustice. To him, healing the land is not a task for one person; it is a communal responsibility. To this end, Ngugi reiterates the fact that though people may not have a choice in the kind of environment they find themselves or the natural resources gifted them by God, living harmoniously with their environment and making positive use of its natural resources is for them to determine. Their collective actions and inactions go a long way to make or mar the benefits derivable from their environment and its resources. Ngugi has succeeded in *Matigari* to further raise the awareness of environmental injustice as a central thematic thrust in his writing where he brings to the attention of readers the damage done to the environment and the exploitation of nature by the ruling class in his society. He believes strongly that the benefits from natural resources should be enjoyed by all and not by the privileged few who not only exploit nature, but throw the people into absolute penury.

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