

## ECO-FEMINISTIC FEMINISCENES IN NGUGI WATHIONG'O'S .

## PETALS OF BLOOD

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**ABSTRACT**

Post-colonialism raised questions against socio-political and cultural colonization. The ecological which is the beginning of the process of domination resulting in the cataclysms of the colonized countries represented as an indirect factor only. The ecological issue of a colonizer dominating and tampering with the natural resources and spoiling its equilibrium is reflected by many writers in their works. Eco- feminism is a branching off from ecocriticism, which is the blending of ecological concerns expressed through literature. The industrial revolutions have transpormed the word into another process of survival, a fight to recreate and survive within the limited resourses. The awareness for conservation of natural resourses is a clichéd issue now, but the concept of literature reflecting these issues is an age old trend which is read in a new focus in the recent times. The term eco- feminism was coined by francoised' eaubonne in her work *le feminism ou la mart* in 1974. The conscious effort of literature reflecting eco-crisis is viewed by critics Anu Shukla, Rini Dwivedi and sheobhushan shukla thus:

Scientists, Social scientists, politicians, philosophers and many ecologically conscious groups are making serious efforts in this direction. However, their effort would remain incomplete if they are not joined by people of literature-...writers,critics and artists deal in word and word is power and energy(6).

The ecocritics believed that the power and energy of 'the word' is the source which can solve the crisis and protect our earth. The canon of ecocriticism thus serves ecology through literature. Remarking on the function of this field Robert kern opines, with the advent and (for better and worse) increasing institutionalization of "ecocriticism" over the last several years, along with the effort to open the literary canon to a fuller sampling of nature writing and the

literature of place, both historical and contemporary growing number of writers and critics are attempting to reverse this situation and to bring environmentalist values into greater relation to what and how they are read.(258) The issue of domination is the focal point of Ngugi wa Thiongo's *Petals of Blood*. The resistance against the exploitation gains a victory in the death of the corrupt leaders, who spoil a provincial town named Illmorag. This triumph happens because of the union of Karega and Wanja, one is a socialist and another is a barmaid. Ngugi Wa Thiongo is a Kenyan post- colonial writer. His novel *Petals of Blood*, published in 1977, derives its title from Derek Walcott's poem, The swamp describing a ginger lily. The novel narrates the process of progress in a small village, Illmorag. The different phase of the "progress" is blended with the ecological changes. The people who lead a simple, primitive life were self-sufficient. The transformation of their village into a city results in a feminine. Now they depend upon the government authorities for their living.

Their criticism against the ruling authorities made Ngugi jobless and he had to move from his homeland. Set in the Post- independence Kenya, the people had lost their ideals after independence. This void of activity, cause and leadership led to a reign of neo- imperialism people lacked ideals and worshipped money. The contrast of the young city dwellers and old villagers, the continuous corruptive methods of the rulers, the barren lands inducing the poverty of the people and the incapability of women in these challenging situation imposed by the new rulers are the central themes of the novel. After the publication of *Petals of Blood*, Ngugi who came out from his Prison term was not reinstated in his teaching position. Instead, like his characters in the novel, he was arrested on petty charges and again served a series of imprisonment terms. "*Petals of Blood*" is a replica of the newly liberated Kenya with the reminiscences from the past. The clashes between the traditional, imperialistic and Neo Colonial ideals confuse the people and the only achievement left for them is to gain money. Ngugi throws in four characters from different walks of life in the small village Illmorag. This village is a barren land, requiring a survival for existence. Illmorag is a symbol of Kenya, exploited, barren, without no hope and future. In this barren land Godfrey Munira tries to establish a school. The villagers thought another settler who will soon vanish. An old woman even asks him thus:

Our young men and women have left us. The glittering metal has called. They go, and the young women only return now and then to deposit the new born with

their grandmothers already aged with scratching this earth for a morsel of life. . . Tell me what then brings you to a deserted home stead? (9).

He has to fight against the distrust of the people who are already against western education and culture which has already ruined them. Munira catches hold his students and tries to run class I and class II. Another settler in this ill-fated town is Abdullah. He and his attendant Joseph resemble Prospero and Caliban till Wanja, a comeback from the town forces Abdullah to send Joseph to the Illmorag Primary school run by Munira. The last to join them is Karega. Ngugi makes this character a regenerative symbol of Kenya. The hope toward the end of their turmoil is carried through Karega's words of a tomorrow. Godfrey Munira believes God has sent him to the rural province to deliver his message. By educating the children in God's ways he is serving religion. Munira is caught in the polarization of the new religion into his spirituality and material practices. His wife Julia is a Pagan, who has adapted to his customs. His officer Mzigo applauds his work. By his patience he has claimed recognition in Illmorag. As a new teacher in the primary school he feels alienated because he could not converse with the villagers whose prime concern is change of season and harvests. In the bar a farmer asks him about "githemithu" season. Munira cannot interpret that it is the summer season. The farmer chides him These children. . . You have too much of the foreigners' maneno in your heads. Did you have a good gathano harvest in your place? Here it was poor and we don't know if the grains of maize and beans can last us to the end of njahi rains.(11).

Thus a natural society which called Munira's bicycle as an 'iron horse' is caught in the whirlwind of industrialization and the growth of capitalism. Munira's life was going smooth until he met Wanja, a prostitute returning to her home town. Munira himself curses the fate that brought them together. The story moves through Munira's narration in the first past and it shifts to Abdullah, Karega, Wanja and the spaces in their narrations filled by an Omniscient narrator. Munira's school becomes well known and he needs a teacher for the alternate classes. He finds Karega in a bar; he takes Karega as his assistant. Karega never hides his ideas. He is a dropout from a famous School. He introduces himself as son of Mariamu, a squatter in Waveru alias Ezeikeli's fields. Munira remembers Mariamu, his father's labourer. Expelled from the school by the head master, he works as a labourer. He is also enchanted by Wanja's beauty. He remembers Ndemi, Munnira's sister who committed suicide for his sake. Wanja too loves him but Karega

leaves Illmorag because Wanja has a relationship with Munira and Abdullah. A proclaimed Marxist Karega maintains silence when police enquire him about the murder of Mzigo, Chui and Kimeria. The prime suspect is Karega but he remains silent till he is released from the charges.

Wanja the central characters of the novel is Kenya, an exploited, ruined but romantic Kenya. Munira describes her as a 'Virgin whore'. All the men in this novel are enchanted by her beauty. When she returns to Illmorag to her grandmother Nyakinyua's place Illmorag starts moving from its deep sleep, she becomes a barmaid in Abdullah's place to compensate Joseph's education. They are a group of people in the city, first was Reverend Bawafana, who does not even hear their problems but starts reaching with his Bible. The next place they reach is Kimeria's, which proves disastrous for her. He again threatens her to spend a night with him, she submits to save Joseph. Mean while Wanja discovers that Karega makes her forget her past guilt. She yearns for a child ( future) which she believes only Karega can give her. Illmorag changes itself to commercial town. The fields are intercepted by national high ways, factories emerge and the drought is over. Children sing traditional songs in praise of rain. Wanja too becomes an industrialist with a brewery for the local palm wine. Her licence to brew the local wine is cancelled. She is reduced to poverty along with Abdullah. She saves her land by opening the sunshine lodge in which she sold herself and employed many other girls. When Karega too returns from his temporary duty as a soldier in the Second World War, he advises Joseph not to read Encyclopedia and the Bible. He is not shocked is at Wanja's transformation. He says We are all prostituted for in a world of grab and take,. . .when a man who has never set his foot on this land can sit in a New York or London office and determine what shall I eat, read, think do only because he sits on a heap of billions taken from the world's poor, in such a world, we are all prostituted.(286).

Wanja, a rebel from her school days elopes from home to hide her pregnancy. Her exploiter plans to take her as his second wife and he is not much bothered about her concerns. she gives birth to a child and drops it in a toilet. After her Baptism with fire Wanja discovers that she is pregnant. When her mother asks who the father is, she draws a picture with charcoal. The figure began to take shape on the board. It was a combination of the sculpture she once saw at the lawyer's place in Nairobi and images of Kimathi in his moments of triumph, laughter, sorrow and terror. . . (402). The fate of the village is proportionately connected with the village

prostitute, Wanja. She is not treated harshly in the novel. Whenever she leaves the village it is affected. Wanja return to Illmorag balances everything. She meets the man who ruined her life. When she is forced again by that usurper, Illmorag suffers. Wanja transforms herself as a pimp at that time Illmorag declines. When everything is purified by fire Wanja is the most affected one. When she reconciles with her mother and realizes the budding of a new life inside her Illmorag regenerates. In the introduction to the novel Moses Isegawa writes thus: she is a woman of mystery and secrets, tormented, with a big burden to carry. She has suffered much in life, like many other women, starting with the sugar daddy who jilted her, she has sold herself in many a bar, but Ngugi does not allow us to despise her . . . Wanja like Kenya itself, has to fight to stay alive and destruction is never too far away.(xv). Ngugi leaves out the question of who is the father of Wanja's child? Her symbolism as motherland is put forth by her answer that the father of her child is Dedan Kimathi, an ideal revolutionist. By making her the sole representative of Kenyan women and Kenya itself the novelist confirms the oneness of women and nature. Eco-Feminists argue about the binary of nature and culture, Wanja is the example of nature tampered by culture, which regenerates again in a cyclical pattern.

#### Works Cited

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