

Education Versus Colonial Hardships in Ngugi's *Dreams in a Time of War* (2010)



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ABSTRACT: The 1952-1959 state of emergency is a milestone in Kenya's colonial history. It was declared by the colonial government when the Mau Mau fighters, in their struggle to chase the British settlers away and give back to Kenyans the land which these Europeans took from them, started to attack indigenes loyal to the government. Thus, one can see why, in the autobiographies/memoirs by many Kenyan authors born before independence, the latter also deal with this period of their country's history. The Kenyan writer's work, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Dreams in a Time of War* comes back to the hardships of colonialism in which school is depicted as a breath of fresh air for the author. In this memoir, the writer has expressed his gratefulness to his mother as well. Using postcolonial theory and biographical criticism, this study will deal with Education versus Colonial Hardships in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Dreams in a Time of War*. However, one may wonder how school is taken as a breath of fresh air for the writer and why he is so grateful to his mother. This article is fully entrenched in postcolonialism, biographical criticism, racism and psychology during the British occupation of Kenya.

KEYWORDS: Kenyan- history-land-British settlers-colonialism-criticism

INTRODUCTION

The 1952-1959 state of emergency is one of the milestones of Kenya's colonial history. It was declared by the colonial government when the Kenya Land Freedom Army (also known as the Mau Mau fighters), in their struggle to chase the British settlers away and give back to Kenyans the land which these Europeans took from them, started to attack indigenes loyal to the government. Still in reaction to the KLFA attacks, the colonial administration's forces, particularly the King's African Rifles and the Kikuyu Home Guard militia, proceeded to the arrest of thousands of natives who were associated or suspected of associating with the Mau Mau fighters. These numerous arrests led to the setting up of many detention camps in the country and caused thousands of victims. It is estimated that between 50,000 and 300,000 people died in the camps or shortly after being released (Elkins, 2005, Blacker, 2007). Thus, one can see why in the autobiographies/memoirs by many Kenyans born before independence, the authors also rake up this period of their country's history. Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Dreams in a Time of War* which "is homage paid to Kenya's nationalists, many of whom paid the supreme price in the struggle to free their country from British colonial yoke."¹ Other autobiographies which also treat of the Mau Mau resistance and the state of emergency are Tom Mboya's *Freedom and After* (1963), Karari Njama's *Mau Mau from Within* (1966), Waruhiu Itote's *Mau Mau General* (1967), *Roots of Freedom* (1975) by Bildad Kaggia, Henry K. Wachanga's *The Swords of Kirinyaga* (1975), *In the House of the Interpreter* (2012) by Ngugi wa Thiong'o, to cite but a few. In *Freedom and After*, Tom Mboya not only pays tribute to Kenyans who fought for their country's independence but also stresses his interest "in outlining the future of an independent Kenya and Africa as a whole."² In *Mau Mau from Within*, Njama celebrates the Kenya Land Freedom Army's courage, passion, heroism, and displays colonial terror, brutality and indigenous betrayal. Itote, in *Mau Mau General*, gives the reason which aroused his decision to join the KLFA and recounts his experiences as a Mau Mau leader and those of other freedom fighters. The author of *Roots of Freedom*, displays a telling story of the sacrifices made by Kenyan people and the pain they went through in order to wrench their independence from the British colonizers. As for Wachanga, in *The Swords of Kirinyaga*, he provides "an eye-witness account of the fight in Kenya forest by one of the principal leaders of the Mau Mau Revolt of 1952-1957."³ Finally, *In the House of the Interpreter* is the continuation of *Dreams in a Time of War*. Ngugi relates the story of his secondary schooldays in a context marked by terror in a state of emergency.

¹ Peter W. Vacunta. "Book Review : Dreams in a Time of War : A Childhood Memoir by Ngugi wa Thiong'o" <https://www.langaa-rpcig.net/book-review-dreams-in-a-time-of-war-a-childhood-memoir>

² Jennifer N. Muchiri. "The Female Autobiographical Voice in Independent Kenya". Unpublished PhD Thesis. University of Nairobi.

³ Mathaga. "The Swords of Kirinyaga by H. K. Wachanga" <https://www.mathaga.com/products/the-sword-of-kirinyaga-by-h-k-wachanga>

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This article will focus on *Dreams in a Time of War* (2010) where the hardships of colonialism are stressed and where school is also presented as a breath of fresh air for Ngugi in the face of the injustices and the degrading treatments which he and his fellow country people were driven under the vigilance of colonial administration. In this memoir, the writer has expressed his gratefulness towards his mother as well. However, one may wonder how school is taken as a breath of fresh air for the writer and why he is so grateful to his mother.

Using postcolonial theory and biographical criticism, this study will deal with Education versus Colonial Hardships in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Dreams in a Time of War* (2010). According to James Daniel Elam, postcolonial theory "is a body of thought primarily concerned with accounting for the political, aesthetic, economic, historical, and social impact of European colonial rule around the world in the 18th through the 20th century."⁴ As for biographical criticism, it is a form of literary criticism which analyzes a writer's biography to show the relationship between the author's life and their works of literature. Biographical criticism is often associated with historical-biographical criticism, a critical method that "sees a literary work chiefly, if not exclusively, as a reflection of its author's life and times."⁵

Based on biographical criticism, racism and psychology, this article will analyze the hardships of colonialism on Ngugi as a teenager and then it will deal with school as a breath of fresh air for Ngugi during the British occupation of Kenya.

The Hardships of Colonialism on Ngugi as a teenager :

Ngugi's first shock caused by the colonial state is the arrest of Jomo Kenyatta on October 20, 1952. He started having an admiration for Jomo Kenyatta and Mbiyu Koinange thanks to the talks of Ngandi Njūgūna, a peer of Ngugi's elder brother, Good Wallace. Kenyatta and Koinange, who studied respectively in England and the United States, are presented by Ngandi as a pair of intellectual giants destined to lead Kenya to independence. One step towards this goal is the creation by Koinange of the Kenya Teachers' College which has been headed by Kenyatta and where Ngandi was educated and trained as a teacher. In addition to Ngandi's talks, Ngugi's admiration for Kenyatta and Koinange is strengthened by the fact that the two men were praised in songs as well :

In my imagination the Kenyatta and Koinange of the songs and of Ngandi's talks became fictional characters, larger than life. I imagined a million Kenyan eyes on a giant Kenyatta's face. I longed to meet the pair, the way one hopes that one may come across a favorite fictional character in real life but knowing full well that such an encounter is impossible. (111)

So, when the narrator learned from Ngandi that Kenyatta would come to Limuru, he resolved not to miss this opportunity of meeting his idol. This explains why the teenager went regularly to Good Wallace's furniture store at Limuru African marketplace, running from Manguo school to the store at lunch breaks "and back in time for afternoon classes." (116). Therefore, one can see the extent to which Ngugi is disappointed and pained when he hears that Kenyatta has been arrested : "The arrest of Jomo Kenyatta may have been a blow to the public, but to me it was personal. It had deprived me of my *raison d'être* for coming to the marketplace so assiduously." (121). October 20, 1952, is also the date when Governor Evelyn Baring declared the state of emergency. As a result, Mau Mau songs and allusions to Kenyatta, Koinange or even Waiyaki wa Hinga (the late great leader of the Gikuyu of southern Kiambu) were criminalized, which constituted another blow to Ngugi : "This abruptly ended my life as a troubadour." (121). In effect, if Ngandi, Good Wallace and their peers integrated Ngugi in their group, it is thanks to the boy's talent in singing. They liked to listen to him sing and accompany him in chorus. Besides, Ngandi taught the narrator other songs and enjoyed introducing him to other audiences : "He liked introducing me at some gatherings, dramatizing the fact that on top of singing I could read the Bible" (106)

While Ngugi goes "through a period of uncertainty" (121) because he cannot enjoy his life of troubadour any more, the outcome of Kīmūchū's night abduction by the colonial forces and his execution trouble him again. As Kīmūchū is the stepson of Ngugi's maternal grandfather, and the former and his stepfather were very close, the old man does not doubt that the colonial forces will not delay in coming for him as well. So Ngugi's grandfather is pushed to seek help every night at his daughter's house, which grieves the writer so much so that he points out the responsibility of the Baring administration :

To see this very powerful man, the respected landowner and custodian of his subclan, yes, my grandfather who wrote letters to the government, in our hut, quaking with fear of colonial malfeasance, was my first real intimation of the import of the state of emergency. [...]. I felt with him his painful humiliation at having to use a chamber pot in his own daughter's hut ! (126)

Another act of the colonial state which affects the author directly is the ban on Karĩng'a and KISA (Kikuyu Independent Schools Association) schools which were created by Kenyans in their quest for self-reliance. Contrary to government and missionary schools which sought to limit African education to basic literacy, carpentry and agriculture, Karĩng'a and KISA schools' goal was to provide the indigenes with as much knowledge as possible in order to be self-dependent. Thus, in their will to fight Kenyan nationalism at the root, the British imperialists decided to ban these Africanist schools, among them, Manguo where Ngugi studies : "The fact that Manguo, a Karĩng'a school, would be no more affected me directly and immediately." (129). As for the Kenya Teachers' College,

⁴ James D. Elam. "Postcolonial Theory." In *Oxford Bibliographies in Literary and Critical Theory*, edited by Eugene O'Brien. New York : Oxford University Press, 2019

⁵ (Guerin, 2005 ; Knoper, 2003 ; Benson, 1989). In "Biographical Criticism." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bibliographical_criticism#cite_note-Benson1989-2

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it is less its closure which pains Ngugi, Ngandi and the rest of their community than its transformation into a detention centre where the nationalists were hanged : *"But the biggest blow to the collective psyche occurred when the colonial state turned the college grounds and buildings into a prison camp where proponents of resistance to colonialism were hanged."* (129)

Apart from being ill, Ngugi had never missed classes. But because of the dreaded British daily raids, following the declaration of the state of emergency, he was prevented from going to school one day in a terrifying way. He had just left his mother's house when his attention was attracted by sounds of gunfire and the presence of many British soldiers. Had he not run back quickly inside, he might have been shot down. The fact that his mother and his sister dragged him into the hut shows how much he was terrified : *"I was shaken but relieved that I had not walked straight into the path of the gunfire."* (162). Ngugi's half brother, Gĩtogo, was shot dead during these raids. Beyond the family relationship, the narrator is pained by the fact that Gĩtogo is deaf and therefore could not hear the white officer shouting at him to stop. Ngugi is also saddened on account of the human qualities of his half brother : *"He was always ready to come to the aid of all, particularly when it came to lifting heavy loads."* (162)

The difficult experience which keeps coming to the narrator's mind, making him sad is the escape of his elder brother, Good Wallace, into the forest. Suspected of holding bullets, Good Wallace was arrested with his uncle Gĩcini by the police. On their way to the police station, Ngugi's brother jumped off the truck and ran away from his captors, bullets whistling behind him. Ngugi is thus separated from a loved one : *"I will be thinking of my brother whom I have loved : his hard work, his determination, his imagination, his love and loyalty to friends."* (166). His uncertainty in connection with what happened to Good Wallace adds to his plight. He fears his brother might be caught or might die due to the difficult living conditions in the mountains. Because of the colonial state, Good Wallace and two of his half brothers belong to two opposed camps now, to Ngugi's great unhappiness : *"I will be thinking of the split in my father's house with two of Wangarĩ's sons, Tumbo and Kabae, working as agents of the colonial state and their half brother out in the mountains trying to bring down the colonial state. Ah, yes, brothers who love one another, now at war."* (166)

In addition to depriving Ngugi's family of a breadwinner, the colonial forces also harass his mother with regard to Good Wallace's case : *"Now and then my mother was called to the Home Guard post for questioning."* (177). The Home Guard posts are notorious for the ill-treatment that were inflicted on the indigenes over there. These ill-treatments included beatings, torture, hard labour, rape and castration (Elkins, 2005). Hence, Ngugi's observation : *"Functioning as a military command center, a police precinct, and a prison, the Home Guard post was a chamber of horrors."* (144). Here, the teenager pays tribute to his mother, for no matter how difficult the conditions of the questionings were, Wanjikũ did not flinch : *"My mother had an unflappable bearing even under the severest of conditions."* (177). But at the same time, Ngugi is worried by the probable fall of his mother's house because his elder brother is not there to prevent it. The author is more concerned about the thought of his brother striving to cope with the cold in the mountains. He has not failed either to pay tribute to Good Wallace and the other freedom fighters who had come, about a week before his exam, to wish him good luck before returning to the forest.

While Ngugi was going through all these hardships, he had a hard time with a white military officer. He and his friend, Kenneth, were coming from an open-air Christian service when the officer ordered them to stop and led them to a group of indigenes with whom they were going to be interrogated. The purpose of this interrogation process called 'screening' was *"to identify those who were loyal to the Mau Mau fighters, either by supporting them directly or by providing shelter and food."* (Asmus et al., 2019). Each person was put in the group of the bad, the worse or the worst before being interrogated. Contrary to Kenneth who was placed in the bad ones, Ngugi was put in the group of the worse by the officer. Yet, the narrator was in school uniform like his friend. The point is that the white man was guided by a hooded loyalist called *gakũnia* who surely knew about Good Wallace. During his interrogation, Ngugi is given a blow to his face by the officer for forgetting to say 'effendi'. His manly attitude to this physical violence cost him more blows : *"... he took my refusal to cry or scream as defiance, and he rained more blows on me. I fell down. I didn't know whether I should stand up or remain on the ground"* (185). Through the attitude of the *gakũnia*, the writer exemplifies the part of responsibility of the loyalists in the oppression of their own people.

Had Ngugi not been informed that he had passed his KAPE exam, his day would have been ruined by the ordeal which he had just undergone. His joy does not delay in being followed by uncertainty and even fear because his mother cannot afford the tuition which his new school, Alliance High School, expects from him. Here, the responsibility of the British colonialists in his present situation is stressed : *"The brother who would have been in a position to help is now in the mountains !"* (189). If they had let Kenyans rule themselves, if they had not stolen their land, Good Wallace would have been with his family. Worse, at this stage of the teenager's preparations for joining his high school, the regrettable stance of the loyalists manifests itself again : *"Rumors start that the rich and the loyalists would surely petition the government to prevent the brother of a Mau Mau guerrilla from going to such a prestigious high school."* (189). And this after all the efforts he made to reach this level.

Fortunately, these two obstacles are removed for him exceptionally by an influential loyalist, Njairũ : *"No force will stop me from going to Alliance High School, he says. He personally goes to all my half brothers to impress upon them the importance of what I have done. Some give their shares freely. Njairũ leans heavily on the few who are reluctant."* (190). Still, there are two other requirements left : a pair of shoes and stockings. Here, Ngugi's elder sister, Njoki, replaces the missing elder brother and comes to her younger brother's rescue : *"... she gives up all she has to buy me the required pair of shoes and stockings."* (191). Hence, the boy's gratefulness : *"I am moved by this."* (191). Even when he has got all he needed and is about to leave for his boarding school,

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he feels the absence of Good Wallace : *"I wish I had a way of saying farewell to Wallace Mwangi, my brother who is out in the cold of the mountains..."* (192).

Ngugi's last shock caused by the Baring administration occurs at the Limuru train station when a white official refused to allow him to board the train to Alliance High School. In effect, the student did not have a pass and neither had he been informed that he was supposed to present one : *"It is a new law under the state of emergency. No member of the Gĩkũyũ, Embu, and Meru community can board the train without a government-issued pass."* (196). In fact, the Gĩkũyũ, Embu and Meru communities are the ones who mainly constitute the Mau Mau guerillas and Ngugi is a Gĩkũyũ. This law of the colonial state thus deprives the teenager of an opportunity for which he has been yearning for a long time : boarding a train for the first time. Ngugi's unprecedented pain is visible through his tears : *"I am a man, I am not supposed to cry, but I cannot help it. The white military officer who had floored me with blows could not make me cry ; but this white officer, a railway official, who has denied me a ride in the train has done it."* (196). At least, he later manages to join Alliance High School, but by bus.

In the face of all these hardships of colonialism, school is of great help to Ngugi and he thanks his mother for giving him this chance.

School as a breath of fresh air for Ngugi :

Ngugi's desire for learning has been aroused by his half brother Kabae and Reverend Kahahu's children : Njambi and Njimi. Demobilized after the Second World War, Kabae set up an office where he provided secretarial and legal services. This is how he earned the reputation of being among the fastest typists on a Remington typewriter. Thus, people lined up in front of his office for services such as legal advice or letter writing in English. As for Njambi and Njimi, they fascinate Ngugi not only thanks to their literacy but also their family's economic independence and their modernity : *"The Kahahu estate of motor vehicles, churchgoing, economic power, and modernity was a contrast to ours, a reservation of hard work, poverty, and tradition..."* (48). The point is that the Kahahu family is financially autonomous partly because the father and two of his children are teachers :

So I had nursed the desire for schooling in silence. Though its seed had been planted by the status of my half brother Kabae in my father's house, its growth was influenced less by his example or that of my own brother Wallace Mwangi than by the children of Lord Reverend Kahahu : Njambi, the girl, and Njimi, a son, both about my age. When I worked in their father's fields harvesting pyrethrum flowers, I had often interacted with them, but I never imagined that I could ever be of their world. (48)

This explains his acceptance to go to school when his mother, Wanjikũ, asked him to. Ngugi was overjoyed and could not believe his ears. But the woman has not failed to remind him that they are poor and make him promise that hunger or any other hardship will not push him to drop school. So his mother is the one who sent him to school : *"My father had no say one way or another in this enterprise. It was my mother's dream and her entire doing."* (50). Therefore, when he was able to read and started enjoying the stories in the Old Testament (the book of magic), it is his mother he thanked first : *"This ability to escape into a world of magic is worth my having gone to school. Thank you, Mother, thank you. The school has opened my eyes."* (55). Ngugi's mother, like many in her community, believes that school provides personal independence. One can therefore understand why Good Wallace did not want his younger brother to help him in his woodworking job and preferred that the student did some reading : *"He liked it best when I was holding a book or a newspaper."* (118).

The narrator himself made clear his awareness of the empowering role of education after he went through the rite of passage : circumcision. He demonstrates that this rite no longer has the importance which it was granted in precolonial times and it has been supplanted by education : *"Though the whole ritual of becoming a man leaves a deep impression on me, I emerge from it convinced more deeply that, for our times, education and learning, not a mark on the flesh, are the way to empower men and women."* (158). This realization has only strengthened his determination to keep the promise which he made to his mother that hunger or any other hardship will not deter him from his studies. Hardships occurred but when they did, school helped Ngugi bear them. As a matter of fact, his brother's joining the Mau Mau guerillas marked a split in his family with two of his half brothers on one side and his elder brother on the other side. The author was simply shocked when he heard a news item where it appeared clearly that Tumbo attempted to sell off Good Wallace to the colonial police.

Ngugi is also disappointed and at a loss about Kahanya who has not only become a Home Guard but ungratefully mocks at Good Wallace. The narrator was going his way when he came across Kahanya and Gĩkonyo Marinda, a Home Guard too. Because Good Wallace is now a freedom fighter, Gĩkonyo looks at Ngugi as if he was *"contaminated with evil."* (167). As for Kahanya, *"He tells me mockingly, almost jeeringly, We understand your brother has climbed to the ranks of captain. I don't know, I say, and continue on my way, and they continue on theirs, laughing."* (167). Yet, Kahanya was among Good Wallace's apprentices and closest friends. Good Wallace taught him carpentry and while the other apprentices paid to learn, Good Wallace paid him for his apprenticeship. The narrator is all the more confused by these Home Guards as they had been Mau Mau adherents, fighting for the freedom of Kenyans. Now they have turned against those who fight for Kenya's freedom.

If the writer has difficulty in understanding Kahanya and Gĩkonyo, this is not the case with his maternal grandfather who tells him to stop coming to his house. In fact, the colonial forces have assassinated the old man's dear stepson and they keep his son in captivity. So he is afraid of having anything to do with someone who has a link with a Mau Mau fighter, to Ngugi's great unhappiness : *"I am sad to lose my special place as his scribe and bird of good omen, but somehow I understand. My mother's house has become*

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a menace to others." (168). In the face of these hardships which he undergoes because of colonialism, particularly the state of emergency, Ngugi, as young student, turns to his studies, determined to succeed and make his mother happy : *"But ours remains a close-knit one-parent family. In addition to the comfort my mother's house gives me, there is school. Though the fear that I might lose my place in Kĩnyogori hovers over me always, it does not actually happen. I am grateful. I seek refuge in learning."* (168).

So Ngugi does not limit himself to what he is taught at school. He and his friend, Kenneth, become passionate readers. They manage to read Dickens's *Great Expectations*, *Lorna Doone* by Richard Doddridge Blackmore, Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*... thanks to their teacher of English, Mr. Kĩbicho, who lent them these books. From time to time, a passage in *Treasure Island* makes him forget his sorrow one moment insofar as he and Kenneth sometimes sing it. Not only does the reading of this book make him dream but it has aroused in him a goal as well : to acquire higher education. Actually, he wants to produce stories like Stevenson's and he believes that higher education is a necessary condition to become a qualified writer. Ngugi's passion for learning is reinforced on the occasion of Good Wallace's nightly visit at home. By ignoring the possibility of encountering the colonial forces and coming to wish Ngugi good luck in his KAPE exam, Good Wallace has induced his brother to cling more to his studies : *"His risky visit motivated me to work harder..."* (173)

The student is all the more motivated to work harder as his elder brother reminds him that education is seen by many in their community as a means to overcome the oppression which they are going through : *"As our mother says, try your best. Knowledge is our light."* (173). It is noteworthy here that the need to make Kenyans independent of the British imperialists, to make Kenyans capable of ruling themselves was on the basis of the creation of independent schools such as Manguo, Kenya Teachers' College run by Africans themselves. After Good Wallace, it is his half brother, Joseph Kabae, a Home Guard who comes to wish the narrator good luck, telling the latter similar words : *"The pen is your weapon."* (174). The Home Guard and the Mau Mau guerilla defend two opposite causes but both believe in education, an empowering tool to people. During the English topic, Ngugi got a pleasant surprise which could not but better his morale. In effect, the candidates were given an activity about a passage in Stevenson's *Treasure Island* : *"It was probably incomprehensible to many candidates, who complained about it afterward, but for Kenneth and me, who understood the context, it was a reward for our extracurricular readings."* (176).

On the one hand, Ngugi is relieved at the end of the exam, which also marked the end of the school year, because he was exhausted and, on the other hand, he is sad because he will miss Mr. Kĩbicho and his books. These books he read with passion, particularly the stories in *Treasure Island* which he read over and over again, enabled him to forget temporarily the trials of the state of emergency. This breath of fresh air which school represents for the narrator can also be noticed in the vulnerability he feels while on holiday : *"We were not under the protective umbrella of a school any longer. We were subject to the same perpetual rhythm of tension bedeviling the entire population."* (177). Thus, he starts worrying again about Good Wallace whom he believes will be betrayed by Kahanya. The teenager is all the more worried as he does not have any possibility to warn his brother. His friend, Ngandi, who might have explained the attitude of Kahanya and helped him send a word to the Mau Mau warrior, is nowhere to be seen. He does not come to Good Wallace's place of work any more whereas Ngugi relied on him to have news about the country and abroad.

In the absence of Ngandi, Ngugi's education comes to his aid once again, thanks to the information he manages to get information from newspapers. As he cannot afford to buy them, he makes do with torn pieces of newspapers which had wrapped food or other goods or which were left at dump sites. As a result, he still holds out the hope of seeing his elder brother again since he has not seen the name of Good Wallace among those captured, killed or hanged. Besides, the boy is heartened by the news of the French forces' defeat in Indochina against General Giap and his troops and is hopeful that the Mau Mau leader, Dedan Kĩmathi, will achieve a similar feat : *"I hope Kĩmathi would achieve the same kind of victory against the British."* (179). If he is trying to imitate Ngandi by recounting the information in the newspapers to Kenneth : *"I try out my knowledge and narrative skills on Kenneth."* (180), this also enables him to share his hopes and fears.

Lastly, the narrator is made to forget momentarily the colonial hardships by his success in the KAPE and his admission to Alliance High School. In addition to being happy, he has brought happiness in his family as well. The student is all the more happier as he is admitted to the best high school in the country. Better, Ngugi is the only one in all Limuru who has been accepted in this prestigious school. So his feat becomes the talk of the region : *"Word spreads in the region. I am the only one from the entire Limuru area who has been admitted to Alliance High School that year."* (189). This shows the place which is granted to education among the writer's people : *"Education has always been seen as a personal and communal ideal."* (190). This explains why, when Ngugi's mother could not afford the tuition required by Alliance High School and when some loyalists wanted to prevent him from studying in this high school, Njairũ, a loyalist, removed these two obstacles for the narrator.

From the day Ngugi completes the requirements of his new school to the moment he leaves for the train station, his mind is almost deterred from the trials of the state of emergency, except when he regrets not having a possibility of saying farewell to his brother. Otherwise, he was busy packing his luggage. Then, he was keen on going to see Kenneth, his grandfather and afterwards his father before the trip, which gave his grandfather and namesake the opportunity to offer him some money : *"I feel good."* (192). As for Wanjikũ, she continues to urge her son to cling to his studies in order to improve his condition : *"Go well, always do your best, and you will be all right."* (195). Ngugi is more excited by the perspective of getting on a train to Alliance High School. For a long time,

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he has yearned for boarding a train like his younger brother and the fictional characters, John and Joan : "... it is as if I'm about to ride a train to paradise." (196)

CONCLUSION

In *Dreams in a Time of War*, Ngugi wa Thiong'o has shown the hardships of colonialism, particularly those of the state of emergency, on a teenager and how learning helped him to bear these hardships. The narrator has also thanked his mother for enabling him to better stand the trials of the state of emergency by not only sending him to school but by urging him to try his best as well. Ngugi's concentration on his studies frequently deterred his mind from the pains which he was undergoing. Among these pains is the arrest of Jomo Kenyatta which dashed his yearning to see this nationalist leader again. Ngugi had not got over his discouragement when the Baring administration's decision to criminalize Mau Mau songs compelled him to give up his life as a troubadour. Things became more difficult for the writer when the fear of being abducted and killed by the colonial forces pushed his maternal grandfather to spend the night in his mother's hut for weeks. Ngugi was all the more affected as the old man had to use a chamber pot in his daughter's hut.

Another hardship is when the author was almost shot on his way to school during a raid of the British soldiers. This was the first time he had been prevented from going to school for a reason other than illness. The death of his half brother, Gĩtogo, during this raid worsened his grievance. Ngugi regretted the killing of a kind person who always came to the aid of people. Gĩtogo was shot in the back because he was deaf and therefore could not hear the white officer who was shouting at him to stop. Later, the narrator was also submitted to physical violence during a mass interrogation session by a white officer who pummelled him simply because he had forgotten to say 'effendi'. But it is Good Wallace's absence which saddens the narrator frequently. He did not know the conditions which his brother was facing in the forest or if he had been captured or killed. Following his brother's joining the Mau Mau warriors, his father's house became split and his mother was repeatedly summoned to the Home Guard post. Besides, because Good Wallace was not there, the student did not have the fees for Alliance High School. But for Njairũ and, to a lesser extent, Njoki, he might not have gone to this high school. Last but not least, a white railway official refused to let him board the train to Alliance High School without a pass, to his great despair, because the rule during the state of emergency was that, as a Gĩkũyũ, Ngugi had to present a government-issued pass.

Fortunately, school helped him a lot during these difficult moments. In effect, he devoted much of his time reading books such as *Great Expectations*, *Lorna Doone*, *Treasure Island*... Being passionate about the stories in *Treasure Island*, he set himself the goal to write stories like the author of this book. And as he believed that one had to have higher education before being allowed to write, he was determined to acquire the said education. His brother's daring act of coming to wish him good luck in the KAPE exam could not but improve his morale. Though Ngugi was pained by the fact that his brother had to return to the mountains, Good Wallace's visit motivated him to focus more on his exam instead of being deconcentrated by the colonial ordeals. The other fact which improved his mindset is a passage which they were given during the English exam and which he had already seen in *Treasure Island*.

Thanks to his education, he read the newspapers and got information about what was prevailing in the country and beyond, while he could not see Ngandi, his main source of information. The efforts he had been making in his studies were rewarded since he succeeded in the exam and was admitted in Alliance High School, the best high school in the country. His feat spread in the region as he was the only one in all Limuru who had been directed to this prestigious school. When he completed all the requirements of Alliance High School, apart from the fact that he regretted he could not say farewell to Good Wallace, his mind was focused on packing his luggage and seeing his friend Kenneth, his father and grandfather before his trip. Ngugi had dreamt of getting on a train for a long time and school eventually gave him the opportunity even though, alas, the white railway official postponed the realization of this dream.

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