

Brave New World – a reading of *The Unbroken Spirit* and *The Verdict of Death*

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This is a stylistic analysis of two novels published in Africa in the twenty-first century. Fifty years ago, when the publishing apparatus was controlled by the European colonial regime, an African writer not only had to have the creative genius, but also the capacity to communicate the intended message in a language other than one's own. Hundreds of fictional works are now published in every major African capital in a variety of languages annually. The contemporary African literary scene includes writers born in the 1980s and 1990s. These emerging writers had no direct personal contact with colonisation. Since literature is a mirror of society, the realities contemporary African writers depict in their writing cannot be the same as the ones depicted in African literature fifty years ago. The core of this paper is an analysis of two texts produced by Africans in the twenty-first century: Wanjiru Waithaka's *The Unbroken Spirit* and Onduko bw'Atebe's *The Verdict of Death*. References are made to earlier works of African literature for comparison purposes. The said analysis of the two texts was carried out against the background of existing definitions of African Literature and the pre-eminent postcolonial theory of literary criticism.

Key words: *Literature, Kenyan, African, postcolonial, stylistic analysis.*

INTRODUCTION

Writing in the East African Standard in the year 2000, John Kariuki posed the question, "Will African Literature be relevant in the 21st century?" Two years later, also writing in the East African Standard, Wambui Mwangi asserted that "Just like the Kenya Institute of Education, literature teachers are to be blamed." Although there is no direct "question and answer" link between these two newspaper articles, they both highlight an interesting phenomenon as far as literature produced on the African continent is concerned: the tendency to fit African literature into too narrow a definition, a definition tied to the incidence of colonization. This paper highlights the fact that African realities have evolved over time. The realities of the twenty-first century are vastly different from the realities that prevailed in the mid-twentieth century when the postcolonial theory of literature came into vogue. In particular, the reality of colonization is now only a distant memory for the people of Africa, an abstract notion rather than a lived experience. Whatever colonization may have done to Africa, the realities of the African continent today have little to do with it. If there are problems then the culprits are the Africans themselves. If progress has been made then the credit must go to those currently living in Africa and not to some superstructure inherited from the European colonizers. The sentiments expressed by John Kariuki and Wambui Mwangi may be proof

that while emerging African creative writers have moved with the times, critical discourses have lagged behind. This paper is therefore an analysis of two texts produced by Africans in the twenty-first century, against the background of existing definitions of African literature and the postcolonial theory of literature.

THE POSTCOLONIAL THEORY OF LITERATURE

As an approach in the critical appreciation of works of literature, the postcolonial theory gained currency in the mid twentieth century. Consequently it has been used primarily with reference to literary works produced in countries that have been colonized by European states in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. One of the earliest definitions of post-colonial literature was done by Ashcroft et al (1989):

What these literatures have in common beyond their special and distinctive regional characteristics is that they emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre. It is this which makes them distinctively post-colonial. (2)

The post-colonial theory is well elaborated in Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). In Fanon's analysis, the literature of colonized peoples goes through three phases. The first phase confirms that the colonized have assimilated the occupier's culture. The literature of the first phase is therefore an extension of the colonizer's literature. The early works of Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, and Ngugi wa Thiong'o were first recognized as, and continue to appear in anthologies of, Commonwealth literature. In the second phase, according to Fanon, there is manifest in literature, a certain anguish, a general uneasiness, which is best dealt with through laughter as certain works of Ferdinand Oyono clearly illustrate. Protest literature makes up the third phase. The second part of Ashcroft et Al's definition, and Fanon's analysis, seem to have excluded what Jahn (1968) refers to as the literature of "freedom" (278).

This tendency of looking at creative writing produced in Africa through too narrow a prism and therefore excluding certain works or writers on the grounds that the work does not fit into the predetermined pattern is a problematic that goes back to the landmark Makerere conference of 1962 at which it was established beyond reasonable doubt that indeed 'African literature' did exist. The bone of contention which scholars of African origin addressed very eloquently at Makerere was that written literature produced by Africans in European languages in the 1950s and 1960s did not, and needed not to, conform to Euro-centric values and standards. It was acknowledged that emerging African writers did not feature in the literary canons of African universities which were fashioned after those of the former colonizer. In their eloquent response at Makerere, African scholars pointed out that the African continent was just emerging from colonial rule. As such, the realities on the African continent were vastly different from those existing in Europe at the time. African writers were responding to these realities. The scholars argued, therefore, that writings by African writers at that time should not be judged on the basis of the differences in the realities described but on the basis of skillful use and manipulation of the linguistic apparatus. Writing in 1972, Peter Nazareth captures the sentiments expressed at Makerere thus:

Can the African writer in a period of colonialism, nationalism and post-colonialism remain un-committed? When writing about people in the changing African society of today, unless the African writer is perfectly satisfied with the status quo, he will be committed, whether explicitly or implicitly. (1-2)

A few pages later, Nazareth captures the message of the scholars who gathered at Makerere to the European literati in the words:

A critic is a bad critic if he formulates criteria based on a reading of a few literary works or a few writers who can be fitted into a pattern and then uses these criteria to condemn all the literary works or writers of a different kind (5-6).

Such sentiments were expressed in different ways by many different scholars. Indeed some administrations of African universities eventually de-linked literary studies from language studies precisely to accommodate the study of literature in English (produced in Africa by indigenous writers) which was not by definition English literature in the sense of being the literature of England. African literature as defined at Makerere became a catch phrase, and the post-colonial theory of literature came into vogue. Fast forward fifty years. The commitment of Creative writers, as per Nazareth quoted

above, against the forces of oppression is no longer directed at the colonizer per se. Indeed, even as far back as 1968, Jahn pointed out that "Fanon has generalized from a very limited sample of writers, and then derives a whole style from his generalization: a jerky style full of images. A nervy style vitalized by rhythm, thoroughly imbued with explosive life. Highly colored too, bronzed, sunlit, violent" (281). Jahn's investigations eventually led him into making the following assertion:

All purely psychological, political or sociological interpretations, therefore, must always remain inadequate, for they neglect the aspect which makes literature what it is [linguistic manipulation] (282).

The focus of the present paper is use of language in two novels published in Kenya in the twenty-first century. It would seem that the styles used by Waithaka and Bw'Atebe do not fit into Fanon's description. The two writers use totally different styles. Neither one of them makes apologies for using the language of the colonizer – indeed, the colonizer does not seem to feature in their consciousness. They have each made the best possible use of the linguistic apparatus available to them. My approach is a deconstruction of the postcolonial approach to literary criticism in the sense that the binary opposition of "colonizer/colonized" is of no consequence, even though the works under study are postcolonial in the sense that they are written in English, a language the writers may not have been able to use if Kenya had never been colonized.

Wanjiru Waithaka's *The Unbroken Spirit* is set in Nairobi, Kenya. It starts in April 1997 (3, 22, 28). Events happen in chronological order starting with Philip's road accident on Ngong road, and ending with Philip and Toni's impromptu trip to Malindi. The characters in Wanjiru Waithaka's *The Unbroken Spirit* are all Kenyans. The story focusses on three characters: Toni, Tessa and Regina, three women friends who are modern, university-educated and financially independent. Toni is serious, strong-willed and decisive. She keeps dreadlocks, drives a double-cabin pick-up truck, and runs her own restaurant business. She is the one who single-handedly plans, and almost manages, to execute Mark. Tessa is a brilliant and hard-working career woman. Starting out as a company executive in a social research firm, she has been promoted to the level of account director within three years. She is a practicing Catholic and is engaged to be married to Jack. Regina is the quintessential carefree urbanite. She owns the house in which she lives with Tessa (inherited from her parents), works as an accountant in her uncle's firm, loves to party and can "take care of herself" while at it (126). The close friends of these three ladies are Philip, Jack and Steve. Other notable characters include Sarah, Joyce, Kibuchi, Kirubi, David, Jane, Mutua, Mark, and the judge Paul Kilonzo. There are also unnamed characters who represent roles such as the chairman of MSRC and Mr. Kirubi's secretary.

Waithaka's work is written in English. The main characters use English as their first language both at home and in the work place. Tessa and Regina, who live in the same house, speak English to each other when at home (6-7). In chapter five, when Toni meets David and Philip for the first time, their private conversation takes place in English (36-37). English is the language Philip and Toni use throughout as their relationship develops, to the end of the novel as they fly to Malindi for a holiday (262). There are a few Kiswahili words, but they are used generally, as anyone would use them while in any urban space in Eastern Africa. The following two

passages are representative of the way language has been used in *The Unbroken Spirit*.

The first one is a description of the secretary at Tessa's place of work:

The receptionist was one of those young thin women who seemed to have been plucked straight out of an ad for a beauty cream. Flawless complexion and make-up, not a single hair out of place, clad in the latest fashion, perfectly manicured hands and toes, and wearing ridiculously high strappy shoes that looked good but made you feel sorry for her knees.(7)

In chapter twelve, there is the description of the chairman's office:

She didn't at first see where the voice was coming from. Her first impression as she entered the office and took in her surroundings was absolute amazement at the sheer opulence of it. The first thing she noticed was a large fifty-two inch television set just inside the entrance on the left. A little further to the left was a huge conference table with eight massive leather backed chairs. On the right and partly hidden by the open door was a seating arrangement of sofas and an antique coffee table with matching stools.

The chairman was seated behind his desk – If it could be called a desk, it was more like a conference table in itself – at the far right corner of the huge office. One entire wall of the office was covered by glass. Heavy black drapes tied with gold sashes swept the floor. A bookshelf and trophy cabinet covered another entire wall. The entire office was done up in black and gold colors and the whole effect was intimidating (106).

These two passages could be lifted from a book set in any part of the world. There is nothing distinctly African about them. The language used is idiomatic English and does not represent an English rendering of discourses from another (African) language. The character of Judge Kilonzo may be the most instructive. Being a High Court judge, he is the ultimate symbol of an elitism rooted in the grand corruption of conspicuous consumption, moral degradation and misuse of power. He is so powerful that the reader only gets to know about him through the whispers and innuendoes of those around him. He is so devoid of compassion that he feels no remorse for what he has done to Regina. It is precisely this bloated sense of self-worth that leads to his downfall: he is too proud to live with the knowledge that Mark was not his son. His untimely demise in mysterious circumstances sends a powerful message of hope to all those oppressed by the ruling elite.

The setting of Onduko bw'Atebe's *The Verdict of Death* is Nairobi, Kenya. The novel was first published in 2005, and the historical setting is definitely after the terrorist bomb attack of 1998. There are numerous details indicating a post-1998 Kenyan setting, but the route Karisa takes to Morii's house leaves no doubt:

Karisa started the car again and they finally drove off from the high court parking, and into Taifa road, weaved their way through traffic and joined the Harambee Avenue. Soon they were on Haile-Selassie Avenue, after being briefly held up in a line of honking traffic caused by matatus deliberately refusing to give way as they joined and left the Moi – Haile-Selassie Avenues' roundabout – commonly known as the bomb blast roundabout... (38).

The events that make up most of the story happen in and around Morii's home, at the airport where he works, at the court as he is sentenced, and inside Mureni Maximum Security Prison (6) where Morii is incarcerated after being convicted. Morii Matano is the central character. He is the third born of three boys. The other two are Karisa and Omar. Morii is "thirty three years old, built like a warrior; tall, broad of shoulder, narrow of waist, and dashing handsome" (3). He is married to Susan with whom he has two children. His problems start with his interest in a beautiful work-mate, Amina, in whom another work-mate, Simon Mutua, is also interested. The characters inside the prison include: the red-eyed and deceptively soft spoken burly officer with "a deep Kalenjin accent" (7); officer Kimani; convicts Rotuba Mengo and Sundiata Monari; Morii's prisoner friends David and Peter Osuka; the infamous Omosh and his two goons.

The narration in Onduko bw'Atebe's *The Verdict of Death* is in the third person. In the introductory paragraphs, the omniscient narrator provides an overview of "the police and judicial facility in the Kenyan system" (1). The narrator uses English, but reported speech is rendered in the language in which it is spoken: sometimes it is in English, sometimes it is in Kiswahili. Sometimes it is prison jargon that doesn't fit into any formal language system. The words "Kaba! Kaba!" provide a good example of prison jargon. They are usually spoken as a pair and as an order, which gets prisoners to squat in groups of five to facilitate the counting exercise. The story follows a somewhat zigzag plot. It starts with the prison trucks driving from the High Court in Nairobi to Mureni Maximum Prison. The *Verdict of Death* is essentially the story of what happens to one of the inmates, Morii Matano, after his conviction. There are, however, flashbacks which fill in the details of how he got there in the first place. The first such flashback forms the beginning of chapter six (25), and relates what happened in the courthouse. The second one starts in the fourth paragraph of chapter nine (41). Chapters twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three, twenty-four, and twenty-five are flashbacks which juxtapose Morii and Mutua's lives after meeting Amina. Chapter twenty-one describes Morii's evening with Amina at Munyao's party. Chapter twenty-two is a description of Mutua's agitation after Amina refuses to accept the gift of a mobile telephone from him. Chapter twenty-three describes the agony both Morii and Amina both go through during the two months after Munyao's party when they do not see each other. Chapter twenty-four describes Mutua as he goes through the process of buying a car to give to Amina. Chapter twenty-five describes Morii's efforts to plan a "chance" meeting with Amina in the line of duty. Sometimes there are flash forwards, like the sentence, "He died two weeks later" with reference to the remand prisoner to whom Morii is chained for the trip to Mureni (5).

Some vivid description has been used. The opening paragraphs provide a detailed description of the two vehicles and the weather conditions (1-2). Morii's prison cell is described in detail (29, 71), as is the wood splitting area (75). Chapter seventeen in particular contains highly descriptive paragraphs, such as the one below:

Morii's heart pounded furiously against his chest. Not only out of exertion but also with fear, as the small boat rocked dangerously in the now awakened sea. He watched in horror as bolts of bright and fierce lightning, in quick succession, reached from the fast darkening skies to lick the waters in awesome zigzag flashes. The sharp cracks of thunder that closely followed on their heels were, without doubt, the querulous rumblings of the devil himself – sure heart stoppers. The strong, speeding winds tore mercilessly at his hands, punished his face, jerking tears from the corners of his eyes,

and a thin clear mucus from his nostrils. But he paddled on, urgency in his strokes, hoping and praying for a miracle, but knowing there would be none. His time had surely come (118).

This is a passage that describes, in minute detail, the feelings of a fictitious character, Morii, in an imaginary situation as well as the imaginary surroundings. In the process, it also exploits some of the diverse advantages available to the omniscient narrator. In *The Verdict of Death*, there are numerous metaphors which are included with English idioms. Examples include “a problem shared is a problem halved” (158). There are also some very prominent metaphors that remain in focus throughout. Prison is equated with death. One of the prisoners refers to their state abode as “dungeons of death” (69). There are several incidents where an inmate loses life and no mention is made of it. The first one is the almost casual remark, “He died two weeks later” (5) which constitutes the end of a man’s life. Two convicts are killed on the day Morii arrives at Mureni. The only reference to them after that is an item hidden in the newspapers “headlined: TWO REMAND PRISONERS SHOT DEAD IN ESCAPE BID” (16).

The writer makes use of capital letters, and references to newspapers, elsewhere in the text, usually in the same context as above: newspaper headlines. On page 137, two such headlines are mentioned and then followed by a paragraph which is supposed to have been on the newspapers:

The media went into a frenzy. They just couldn’t get enough barbs and brick bats to hurl at the judiciary. WHO NEEDS ENEMIES IF THESE ARE THE FRIENDS WE HAVE IN THE JUDICIARY? Screamed a newspaper headline. MURDERER ESCAPES WITH JUST A SLAP ON THE WRIST, screamed yet another.

How [...] do we expect the police to reign in crime, if their efforts are, at best, only spat at by the judiciary? Posed one editorial (137).

The words that are purported to be taken from a newspaper article are in italics in the text. Italics have also been used when the words reported are spoken in Kiswahili (24, 272) or not spoken at all but only thoughts in the heads of the characters (31-33, 273-275). As can be seen from the above passages, the writer uses idiomatic English. Common idioms include “there is safety in numbers” (136); “pleasure to meet you” (153); “cogwheels of his brain” and “brow knitted in concentration” (171); “little cupid taking aim” (173); and sometimes almost a whole paragraph of them such as the one below:

As he put distance between him and the airport, a sudden and urgent craving for a beer had gripped him, steering him to the nearest bar there was: The Village Connection. He drove into the bar’s parking as if all the seven demons were after him, came to a screeching halt, and strode into the establishment as if marching to war (157).

The use of idiomatic English is widespread. Even the prisoners speak Standard English to each other. Chapter seventeen is a good example of the fluency of prisoners. Starting from the point when Morii screams at the other prisoners, “Shut up you hypocrites, you can’t live with a little spittle but comfortably snuggle by a bucketful of shit the whole nightlong. You disgust me” (111). Sometimes colloquial expressions are used. On page 154 there is the expression “what a hunk.” Stereotypes are perpetuated through language use. The most prominent

one being that men are attracted to beautiful women to the point of becoming senseless. Morii, the central character, is a happily married father of two when he meets Amina. He still succumbs to her beauty. Indeed it is his involvement with Amina that creates the tension that becomes a story. Another stereotype is the description of the doctor in chapter forty-two: “He looked too much like the village businessman type, growing fat and over-comfortable, yet always alert to the chance for a quick buck” (274).

There is some irony in the story. Chapter twenty is a good example (141-150). It describes the thoughts, feelings and actions of Morii and Amina, the day after the party at Joseph Munyao’s. Morii and Amina spend the whole day thinking about each other. Each of them stays close to the phone all day hoping the other will call, but neither of them telephones the other. In the end each is convinced that the other does not really care enough to telephone.

Another irony occurs in chapter twenty-five. The chapter describes Morii’s efforts to arrange a “chance” meeting with Amina at work. In the end he manages to get a colleague to synchronize their work schedules. Thereafter Morii is so happy that he spends a wonderful afternoon at home with his wife and children, culminating in a night of lovemaking (175). The irony is that this romantic encounter between Morii and his wife takes place only after he is sure of seeing Amina once again. There is even greater irony in chapter thirty five (229-236). This is the chapter following Morii’s proposal to make Amina his second wife under customary law (224). As they wait to take the train to Manchester, they have an interesting discussion about Kenya’s transport system, during which Morii says:

I strongly believe that it’s because our determination as a people to want and embrace only that which is good, is badly wanting [...] we as a people, have such a large capacity of tolerance for that which is plainly mediocre (230).

Here is the main character, a happily married man who has just asked a beautiful young woman to be his second wife, wondering why “we as a people” tolerate mediocrity. The irony is that he seems completely unaware of the contradictions between his utterances and his actions. He thinks, in fact, that he is an exception from the collective that tolerates mediocrity. There is further irony in the fact that even the beautiful, young and presumably intelligent woman does not see the contradictions either. It is Amina who starts the discussion by asking the question, “What is it we do or don’t do, that makes a mess of almost every sphere of our lives?” (230). Nevertheless, she is unable to see the answer, even after aunt Maria asks the obvious:

you are a very beautiful and seemingly very intelligent girl; you’ve got a glamorous, well-paying job; and I know for a fact that men of all shades of color, and from all walks of life, will soon – if they aren’t already – be falling on their knees, begging for your love [...] why would you want ... to embrace the tough, thankless, unhappy life of a second wife? (234)

Morii and Amina represent all of us when we point at the speck in our brother’s eye, but can’t see the log in our own. The hypocrisy they are engaged in is precisely the Achilles’ heel of modern Kenyan society, and modern African societies in general. Individuals do something which, even by their own objective standards, is not quite right. But somehow, through some convoluted kind of logic, they find a way to justify their actions. Inevitably, the sum total of all the small wrongs done

by individuals adds up to the social ills which we then loudly castigate as poor governance.

The discussion between Morii and Amina is about the transport system, or the lack of one. Significantly, their selfishness and impropriety eventually mess up their relationships, the personal lives of people close to them, and Morii's career. Bw'Atebe's style gives *The Verdict of Death* a sense of precision and speed. In particular, numbers are often written as figures rather than in words. The introduction to precision and numbers as being of great consequence comes in chapter eleven (59-67) after Morii's first nap in prison. He checks his watch in at ten to five. What seems like a lifetime of activities later, he finds it difficult to believe that it is only five-thirty in the afternoon? He is completely disoriented. The shouts of "Kaba! Kaba!" followed by the figure thirty five only add to his confusion. From that point on, the writer dispenses with words, and numbers are rendered in figures.

The choice of an airline steward as a central character is also significant. Precision is indispensable in the airline industry. A fraction of a second can make the difference between life and death for hundreds of people at a go. The airline industry is also associated with glamour and worldliness. The routine experiences of Morii and his colleagues happen in international airports in the famous world capitals such as Johannesburg and London. All these hints are finally given expression by the phrase "the new IT age, where information is spread at dizzying speeds" (217). Waithaka's and Bw'Atebe's subjects and stylistic choices are a total contradiction of what might be expected of "African literature." The two twenty-first century texts used for this paper are set in Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya. The city is a melting pot where Kenyans from all corners of the nation meet, live and work together. Earlier texts, such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* and Henry Ole Kulet's *To Become a Man*, are set in remote rural villages.

Each village is home to a group of people who are considered (in the fictional world of the work) to be ethnically and culturally homogenous. Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* is set in the fictional location of Ilmorog in Kenya. When the residents want to dialogue with their Member of Parliament, they undertake a journey of epic proportions to the capital city, Nairobi. With the exception of Abdalla all the characters in Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* can be identified as being of Kikuyu extraction. The predominant theme is the exploitation of the majority by the ruling minority. Ngugi writes in English. His characters live their lives in Kikuyu. Henry Ole Kulet's *To Become a Man* is set in Masailand, Kenya. The village is still very traditional and Leshao has to travel very far to go to school. Conventional (European-style) schooling, as we know it today, was still a "foreign" concept then. Indeed, Leshao goes to school against the wishes of his traditionalist father. The main characters in Ole Kulet's *To Become a Man* are Maasai. They have Maasai names. They live in Maasai Manyatta's. They engage in Maasai cultural practices such as cattle raids and circumcision. There is the one exception of the European missionary. The predominant theme is one of changing cultural norms occasioned by the arrival of the Europeans in Africa. Henry Ole Kulet writes in English. His characters live their lives in Maa, the language of the Maasai people of Kenya. Even the European missionary speaks Maa. Both *Petals of Blood* and *To Become a Man* are therefore "translations" where the narrator speaks and understands the language spoken by the characters, and is able to render the narrative into English.

In the works set in the twenty-first century, the characters are urbanites born and bred. They have first names that could

belong in any city in the Commonwealth. Examples include Tessa, Regina, Mark, Philip, Susan, Simon, Joseph. Others, like Morii and Amina, could belong to any number of Kenyan communities. In the earlier texts the characters have names that place them within a specific cultural space. They speak the same language. They share a common value system and partake of the same cultural practices. The key themes in early African literature include the clash between European and African traditions, oppression of the majority by the ruling minority, poverty, illiteracy and social evils associated with urbanization. The family and kinship bonds are taken for granted and exploited, but the all-important themes of love, marriage and family life are almost non-existent in early African literature.

It is my contention that it is precisely the subject and stylistic choices that Waithaka and Bw'Atebe make that place Kenya squarely in the global scene of the twenty-first century. Personal cars, the Internet, mobile telephones and other modern gadgets are used by the characters without a second thought, without need for authorial intrusion. It does not matter whether progress and technological advances came through the colonizer or the neo-colonizer. They are appreciated for what they are and for the positive difference they make in the lives of people. After all, even countries that have not recently suffered the experience of colonization have modernized to enjoy the advantages of technological progress.

Themes in the two texts produced in the twenty-first century are different from the themes that dominated earlier African literature. The twenty-first century texts have themes that include human rights, the justice system, love and marriage, friendship and basic human survival in a complex world. For instance, the main themes in Waithaka's *The Unbroken Spirit* are friendship, sexual harassment, and gender relations in a modern economy. In Bw'Atebe's *The Verdict of Death*, Morii Matano is a handsome, educated man. He has a glamorous job. He is happily married. He is framed for a crime he did not commit. The judge is bribed to sentence him to a jail term without the option of a fine. While in prison, he is mistreated and violated. These problems and crimes are the current reality. They cannot be linked to colonization. The character of Omosh is a creation of the current society, not a psychological aberration due to the incidence of colonization. Like Morii in prison, Kenya must fight it out with other countries of the world socially, culturally and economically. Morii does not enjoy any favors while in prison for being a first offender or a non-offender. Similarly, Kenya and other postcolonial nations should not expect any favors just because they have recently been colonized.

CONCLUSION

In the texts written in the twenty-first century, the language of the narrative is English. The characters speak English to one another and even think in English when alone. The writer is therefore in a position to explore all aspects of the lives of the characters without linguistic limitations or cultural constraints. In the earlier works by African writers, such as Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Kulet's *To Become a Man*, life "happens" in the local language, and is rendered in English by the writer.

The writer in the earlier texts is both writer and translator. By default, therefore, the writer can only explore the consciousness of those characters who speak his language. It follows, therefore, that a writer who has placed this restriction on himself or herself cannot do justice to characters who do not share the language and value systems of the locality.

Literature produced by Africans on the African continent is no longer synonymous with postcoloniality. Indeed where African literature in the twenty-first century is concerned, postcoloniality has become obsolete. The issue raised by both John Kariuki and Wambui Mwangi (cited above), therefore, is not whether "African Literature" will be relevant in the twenty-first century but rather the realization that the concerns raised in fictional works by African writers in the twenty-first century may not be adequately addressed by use of the postcolonial literary theory. The concerns reflect the reality in African nations, Kenya in the case of Onduko bw'Atebe's *The Verdict of Death* and Wanjiru Waithaka's *The Unbroken Spirit*. Time did not stand still at independence. Readers and critics can use other literary theories in their literary analyses, and push critical debates in new directions.

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