

DECLARATION

I DECLARE THAT MYTH AS A TOOL OF LITERARY, SOCIO-ECONOMIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIBERATION IN SELECTED WORKS OF NAGUIB MAHFOUZ, NGUGI WA THIONG'O AND ZAKES MDA'S SELECTED WRITINGS IS MY OWN WORK, THAT ALL SOURCES USED OR QUOTED HAVE BEEN INDICATED BY MEANS OF COMPLETE REFERENCES, AND THAT THIS THESIS WAS NOT PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED BY ME FOR A DEGREE AT ANOTHER UNIVERSITY.

G.S.Mashau

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Alidzulwi Nyatshiongo Mufamadi, my father, the late Michael Muronga Mashau Mufamadi, and the entire Mashau royal family.

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines myth as a tool of literary, socio-economic, cultural and political liberation in selected works of Naguib Mahfouz, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Zakes Mda. These authors' works such as *The Cairo Trilogy* (1957), *The Children of the Alley* (1959), *Ways of Dying* (1995) (2004), *The Heart of Redness* (2000), *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2002), *Weep Not, Child* 1964 (1997), *The River Between* 1965 (1980), *A Grain of Wheat*, 1967 (1983), *Petals of Blood* 1977 (1986), *Devil on the Cross*, 1982 (1987), and *Matigari* 1987 (1990) abound with socio-economic, cultural and political iniquities from which the different societies have and are continuously striving to liberate themselves through the use of myths.

Although various aspects of myths by various writers have been investigated and deliberated on over the years, no such study which compares three countries as I have done in this thesis, has ever been undertaken. This thus contributes to the corpus of comparative criticism by examining the roles of myth in the liberation struggle in three basically different countries with different beliefs.

There exist significant similarities but also considerable differences in Mahfouz, Ngugi and Mda's portrayals of liberation myths obviously owing to their cultural, religious educational, social, political and traditional backgrounds. Although the three authors are all Africans, Mahfouz's roots are Arabic and his being a Muslim makes his writing differ notably from those of Ngugi and Mda. While the three authors deliberate on the myth of political liberation, Mahfouz only gives glimpses which at times are much wanting to an extent that other sources have to be used as supplements. This is evident in his much acclaimed *The Cairo Trilogy*. The same applies to Mda who minutely details the Frontier Wars at the expense of the South African liberation struggle. Ngugi's handling of the Mau Mau liberation struggle, especially in *Weep Not, Child* and *A Grain of Wheat* is incredible and it reveals his accomplished literary craftsmanship.

The three authors are all fond of magic realism, an element that can never be divorced from myth. Magical figures such as Gebelawi in *The Children of the Alley*, Gikuyu and Mumbi in Ngugi's *The River Between*, or Nongqawuse's ancestors who dwell in the spiritual world but are ready to come back and join the living, are magical

elements blending superstition with real world beliefs. The stories of these authors explain these magical elements as real occurrences, presented in a manner that places the "real" and the "fantastic" in the same stream of thought. These characters continue to be alive beyond the normal length of life and are depicted as being present throughout many generations. Even when the stories themselves are conveyed in a real setting, these characters obviously break the rules of our real world. The atmosphere they create is eerie and full of mystery. What the authors are doing is to remind us of the many and vast mysteries that are there in life and will continue to confound us.

The study has also shown how the three authors locate women with the liberation myths in their countries. The saying that goes, "A woman's place is in the kitchen" bodes well with most of the Egyptian women while Kenyan and South African women become the cogs of the liberation movements. Even so, it is Kenyan women as seen in *A Grain of Wheat*, *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross* who are occupied with and resilient in the struggle. Surprisingly, pertaining to the liberation of women from patriarchal structures, although at a lesser degree on the portrayal of Mahfouz's females, all three authors successfully portray women who are striving to unyoke themselves from male bondage.

In addition, the three authors have effectively depicted the youth who are resourceful and useful in the struggle for liberation.

While both Mahfouz and Ngugi vocalize their Marxist social, political and economic doctrines, Ngugi focuses mainly on neo-colonialism and its effects as revealed in *A Grain of Wheat*, *Petals of Blood*, *Matigari*, and his later works. Ngugi is convinced that the working class has a responsibility to fight neo-colonialism if the masses are to enjoy the wealth of their country. Mda, by contrast, tends to reveal social, political and economical disparities in a transitional and post-apartheid south Africa.

The introduction clarifies various concepts, hypotheses and ideas. The next three chapters each deals with the role of the liberation struggle in the works of the selected writers. Finally a conclusion rounds off the thesis followed by the bibliography.

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