



**Revue Internationale de Langue,  
Littérature, Culture et Civilisation**

**Actes du colloque international**

**Vol. 2, N°2, 30 novembre 2021  
ISSN : 2709-5487**

# **Revue Internationale de Langue, Littérature, Culture et Civilisation**

**Actes du colloque international sur le thème :**

**« Justice créatrice, droits humains et responsabilité au service  
de la paix »**

***“Creative Justice, Human Rights and Responsibility as Passes to Peace”***

**Revue annuelle multilingue  
Multilingual Annual Journal**

**www.nyougam.com  
ISSN : 2709-5487  
E-ISSN : 2709-5495  
Lomé-TOGO**

## ***Revue Internationale de Langue, Littérature, Culture et Civilisation***

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**Contacts :** (+228) 90284891/91643242/92411793

Email : [larellicca2017@gmail.com](mailto:larellicca2017@gmail.com)

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ISSN : 2709-5487

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### Editorial

La *Revue Internationale de Langue, Littérature, Culture et Civilisation* (RILLiCC) est une revue à comité de lecture en phase d'indexation recommandée par le Conseil Africain et Malgache pour l'Enseignement Supérieur (CAMES). Elle est la revue du Laboratoire de Recherche en Langues, Littérature, Culture et Civilisation Anglophones (LaReLLiCCA) dont elle publie les résultats des recherches en lien avec la recherche et la pédagogie sur des orientations innovantes et stimulantes à la vie et vision améliorées de l'académie et de la société. La revue accepte les textes qui cadrent avec des enjeux épistémologiques et des problématiques actuels pour être au rendez-vous de la contribution à la résolution des problèmes contemporains.

RILLiCC met en éveil son lectorat par rapport aux défis académiques et sociaux qui se posent en Afrique et dans le monde en matière de science littéraire et des crises éthiques. Il est établi que les difficultés du vivre-ensemble sont fondées sur le radicalisme et l'extrémisme violents. En effet, ces crises et manifestations ne sont que des effets des causes cachées dans l'imaginaire qu'il faut (re)modeler au grand bonheur collectif. Comme il convient de le noter ici, un grand défi se pose aux chercheurs qui se doivent aujourd'hui d'être conscients que la science littéraire n'est pas rétribuée à sa juste valeur quand elle se voit habillée sous leurs yeux du mythe d'Albatros ou d'un cymbale sonore. L'idée qui se cache malheureusement derrière cette mythologie est que la littérature ne semble pas contribuer efficacement à la résolution des problèmes de société comme les sciences exactes. Dire que la recherche a une valeur est une chose, le prouver en est une autre. La *Revue Internationale de Langue, Littérature, Culture et Civilisation* à travers les activités du LaReLLiCCA entend faire bénéficier à son lectorat et à sa société cible, les retombées d'une recherche appliquée.

Le comité spécialisé « Lettres et Sciences Humaines » du Conseil Africain et Malgache pour l'Enseignement Supérieur (CAMES) recommande l'utilisation harmonisée des styles de rédaction et la présente revue s'inscrit dans cette logique directrice en adoptant le style APA.

L'orientation éditoriale de cette revue inscrit les résultats pragmatiques et novateurs des recherches sur fond social de médiation, d'inclusion et de réciprocité qui permettent de maîtriser les racines du mal et réaliser les objectifs du développement durable déclencheurs de paix partagée.

Lomé, le 20 octobre 2020.

Le directeur de publication,

Professeur Ataféï PEWISSI,

Directeur du Laboratoire de Recherche en Langues, Littérature, Culture et Civilisation Anglophones (LaReLLiCCA), Faculté des Lettres, Langues et Arts, Université de Lomé.  
Tél : (+228) 90284891, e-mail : sapewissi@yahoo.com

### ***Ligne éditoriale***

**Volume :** La taille du manuscrit est comprise entre 4500 et 6000 mots.  
**Format:** papier A4, **Police:** Times New Roman, **Taille:** 11,5, **Interligne** 1,15.

### ***Ordre logique du texte***

Un article doit être un tout cohérent. Les différents éléments de la structure doivent faire un tout cohérent avec le titre. Ainsi, tout texte soumis pour publication doit comporter:

- un titre en caractère d'imprimerie ; il doit être expressif et d'actualité, et ne doit pas excéder 24 mots ;
- un résumé en anglais-français, anglais-allemand, ou anglais-espagnol selon la langue utilisée pour rédiger l'article. Se limiter exclusivement à objectif/problématique, cadre théorique et méthodologique, et résultats. Aucun de ces résumés ne devra dépasser 150 mots ;
- des mots clés en français, en anglais, en allemand et en espagnol : entre 5 et 7 mots clés ;
- une introduction (un aperçu historique sur le sujet ou revue de la littérature en bref, une problématique, un cadre théorique et méthodologique, et une structure du travail) en 600 mots au maximum ;
- un développement dont les différents axes sont titrés. Il n'est autorisé que trois niveaux de titres. Pour le titrage, il est vivement recommandé d'utiliser les chiffres arabes ; les titres alphabétiques et alphanumériques ne sont pas acceptés ;
- une conclusion (rappel de la problématique, résumé très bref du travail réalisé, résultats obtenus, implémentation) en 400 mots au maximum ;
- liste des références : par ordre alphabétique des noms de familles des auteurs cités.

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Il n'est fait mention dans la liste de références que des sources effectivement utilisées (citées, paraphrasées, résumées) dans le texte de l'auteur. Pour leur présentation, la norme American Psychological Association (APA) ou références intégrées est exigée de tous les auteurs qui veulent faire publier leur texte dans la revue. Il est fait exigence aux auteurs de n'utiliser que la seule norme dans leur texte. Pour en savoir

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Le comité de rédaction exige APA (Auteur, année : page). L'utilisation des notes de bas de pages n'intervient qu'à des fins d'explication complémentaire. La présentation des références en style métissé est formellement interdite.

### **La gestion des citations :**

**Longues citations :** Les citations de plus de quarante (40) mots sont considérées comme longues ; elles doivent être mises en retrait dans le texte en interligne simple.

**Les citations courtes :** les citations d'un (1) à quarante (40) mots sont considérées comme courtes ; elles sont mises entre guillemets et intégrées au texte de l'auteur.

### **Résumé :**

- ✓ Pour Pewissi (2017), le Womanisme transcende les cloisons du genre.
- ✓ Ourso (2013:12) trouve les voyelles qui débordent le cadre circonscrit comme des voyelles récalcitrantes.

### **Résumé ou paraphrase :**

- ✓ Ourso (2013:12) trouve les voyelles qui débordent le cadre circonscrit comme des voyelles récalcitrantes.

### **Exemple de référence**

#### **Pour un livre**

Collin, H. P. (1988). *Dictionary of Government and Politics*. UK: Peter Collin Publishing.

#### **Pour un article tiré d'un ouvrage collectif**

Gill, W. (1998/1990). "Writing and Language: Making the Silence Speak." In Sheila Ruth, *Issues in Feminism: An Introduction to Women's Studies*. London: Mayfield Publishing Company, Fourth Edition. Pp. 151-176.

#### **Utilisation de Ibid., op. cit, sic entre autres**

**Ibidem (Ibid.)** intervient à partir de la deuxième note d'une référence source citée. Ibid. est suivi du numéro de page si elle est différente de

référence mère dont elle est consécutive. Exemple : *ibid.*, ou *ibidem*, p. x.

**Op. cit.** signifie ‘la source pré-citée’. Il est utilisé quand, au lieu de deux références consécutives, une ou plusieurs sources sont intercalées. En ce moment, la deuxième des références consécutives exige l’usage de *op. cit.* suivi de la page si cette dernière diffère de la précédente.

### **Typographie**

-La *Revue Internationale de Langue, Littérature, Culture et Civilisation* interdit tout soulignement et toute mise en gras des caractères ou des portions de textes.

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Pour les textes contenant les tableaux, il est demandé aux auteurs de les numéroter en chiffres romains selon l’ordre de leur apparition dans le texte. Chaque tableau devra comporter un titre précis et une source propre. Par contre, les schémas et illustrations devront être numérotés en chiffres arabes et dans l’ordre d’apparition dans le texte.

La largeur des tableaux intégrés au travail doit être 10 cm maximum, format A4, orientation portrait.

### **Instruction et acceptation d’article**

A partir du volume 2 de la présente édition, les dates de réception et d’acceptation des textes sont marquées, au niveau de chaque article. Deux (02) à trois (03) instructions sont obligatoires pour plus d’assurance de qualité.



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## **LITTERATURE**

# **Ethical Reading and Creative Justice in Covid Period: A Postmodern Perspective on Ngugi wa Thiong'o's "Dawn Of Darkness"**

**Damlègue LARE**

Université de Lomé

laredamlegue@gmail.com

Reçu le : 29/03/2021    Accepté le : 5/10/2021    Publié le : 30/11/2021

## **Abstract**

This article analyses Ngugi's critical thoughts on the remaking of values due to the covid 19 lockdown experiences from postmodern theoretical approach. The study explains the concept of creative justice as asset to peace and argues that literature can contribute to peace and create a bridge between the sudden fracturing of social brotherhood and the new individualism created by the lockdown during covid19. In practice, Covid 19 has broken the traditional connectivity of humans and challenged humanness.

**Key words:** ethics, justice, peace, covid 19, postmodernism.

## **Résumé**

Cet article analyse les pensées critiques de Ngugi sur la refonte des valeurs en raison des expériences du confinement dû au covid 19 à partir d'une approche théorique postmoderne. L'étude explique le concept de justice créative comme un atout pour la paix et soutient que la littérature peut contribuer à la paix et créer un pont entre la rupture soudaine de la fraternité sociale et le nouvel individualisme créé par le confinement pendant la covid19. Dans la pratique, Covid 19 a brisé la connectivité traditionnelle des humains et défié l'humanité.

**Mots clés:** éthique, justice, paix, covid 19, postmodernisme.

## **Introduction**

Disease and health issues have been discussed in African literature but pandemic as a sign of postmodernism has not yet received enough critical attention. What has particularly been of interest is how the pandemic affected humans' lifestyle worldwide and African character in particular,

and which Ngugi reflected on in his poem “Dawn of Darkness” written on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2020. In a collective volume titled *Health and Mental Issues in the Literary Imagination* (Mamadou Kandji 2011), Mody Sidibé and Pierre Kramoko wrote two essays on epidemics in Literature, focussing mostly on symptomatic reading and the social effects in terms of human loss. While Sidibé focussed on the 1665 London epidemic and its social damages in terms of human lives loss in Daniel Defoe’s *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722), Kramoko concentrated on the epidemic affecting native Americans in Louise Eldrick’s *Tracks* (1988). Coming to African literature, if epidemics are not new phenomena therein, critical approaches from epidemiological perspectives are few. T. M. Aluko’s *One Man One Wife* (1977) which sketches out the small pox epidemic suffers critical attention while Elechi Amadi’s *The Concubine* (1966) and Ayi Kwei Armah’s *The Healers* (1979) address local distempers without seriously being discussed. Critical approaches lack pragmatism in that they limited their analyses at symptomatic levels ignoring the effects of the epidemics on the social habits among Africans. The present study focuses on Ngugi’s poem “Dawn of Darkness” (2020) and offers an ethical reading of the covid 19 pandemic and the author’s perspective on creative justice as remedy to human relations breakings and African ethics in the middle of the inescapable plague. The specific question that holds my attention is: how can covid 19 be perceived as a sign of postmodern condition which we are called to live with in Ngugi’s “Dawn of Darkness”. What reading should one make of the recalibrations of social values in Africa in times of covid?

### **1. Theorizing the Postmodern Condition in “Dawn of Darkness”**

The methodological approach adopted in this study is textual analysis of the poem “Dawn of Darkness” (Ngugi 2020) sustained by postmodern critical theory. Postmodernist thought is wound around the politics of difference, relativism, fragmentation, change, incertitude and the lack of originality. Attacking the idea of a notional center or dominant ideology postmodernist thought facilitated the promotion of a politics of difference (Christopher Butler 2002: 57). Under postmodern conditions, the ordered social values, class politics and ethical norms preferred by modernists and socialist have given way to a far diffuse and pluralistic identity

politics. Scholars of postmodernism have agreed that life in postmodernism thrives of perpetual beginnings. There is not centrality of knowledge and truth but pluralities of knowledge and truths. Bricolage, error and trial are the hallmarks of society in perpetual search for reference. Jean-François Lyotard attacks the prevailing grand narratives (Lyotard 1984) and Jean Baudrillard (1990) talks of the disguises of evil. In approaching Ngugi's poem from postmodern perspective, I am trying to bring out the social realities and ethical restrictions that the novella covid 19 has imposed on humans in the world and Africa in particular and which Ngugi shows are in contradiction with African character, people's former habits which they have to forsake to preserve life. The analysis built on the postmodernist approach brings out the questioning of African lifestyle hitherto considered as unifying, gestures of human bonding, morally correct, socially commendable for social harmony. Such African habits are handshaking, the hug and public gatherings. From line 1 to line 4, Ngugi exclaims:

I know, I know,  
It threatens the common gestures of human  
bonding  
The handshaking,  
The hug (Ngugi 2020: 1).

There are truths that transpire in Ngugi's poems and which make the adoption of social barriers unavoidable. The covid 19 pandemic is a deadly disease for it is very contagious. Clinically, it was proved to be one of the deadly illnesses of contemporary age. People have to choose between the threat of the disease and the pleasurable lifestyle which unfortunately does not guarantee health security. The delay of vaccine therapy makes the disease more dangerous and in majority of cases fatal for infected patients presenting risky syndromes. In the face of the covid disease, Africans have to choose between survival and the convivial mood procured by the former social contacts. In such a choice, identity does not respond to the call of an essential human value. Survival comes first, for if one survives, time is still left to redefine social bonding norms and ethical values that refurbish happiness. The ethical reading being done here seeks to establish that between values of common survival and

norms of social bonding, the choice should be made first on the survival techniques.

The covid 19 took people unaware, and they were unprepared for the sudden pandemic outbreak. This is expressed in line 7 of the poem where the poet describes the surprise as “so much that we often beat our breasts” (1). The immediate consequence of the lockdown was physical separation, isolation, and loneliness. And yet, the long cohabitation of people sharing the same place of habitation creates tensions and quarrels, as domestic violence rose in couples, rendering fragile marriages and family relationships. The poet describes life under covid lockdown as a trial revealing human frailty and weaknesses. The darkness metaphor in the title repeated in lines 25 and 30 refer to that lockdown period where even strong economic institutions suffered financial loss. The loss of employment by thousands of workers equally pertains to the metaphor of darkness. The darkness becomes even thicker when the poets makes the reader think of the many people who lost their beloved ones and had no chance of seeing them again. Nevertheless, in the mist of that thick darkness, Ngugi proclaims a message of hope by constructing an antiphrase: “dawn of darkness” and “the light of darkness” in the title and in line 25 (Ngugi 2020: 1). Dawn always comes after the night, thus after darkness. The image of dawn is telling in the poem. If there is life, there is hope, proclaims Ngugi in lines 17-18: No night is so dark that /It will not end in dawn (Ngugi 2020; 1). Such figurative statement is both a literal truth and a parabolic talk, for Ngugi sees beyond the pandemic situation the reconstruction of society, the resilience that rejuvenates Africa and remakes life enjoyable.

## **2. The Social Metaphor of Covid 19 as Darkness**

Metaphors have four different implications in the poem: social, cultural, economic and political.

### **- Social implication of covid 19**

The social implications of the covid in the poem come in lines 2 and 10 where Ngugi says that the disease has “poisoned” the “social bonding”, the African “humanity” and “the legal right of personhood” by which he implies that social life all over the world, which is supposed to be

unifying has taken fragmentary turn, with communal values giving way to individualism. Social institutions like weddings, funerals, baptisms, gatherings on market days suffer due to the rules of limitation of the attendance numbers. The metaphor of covid 19 comes under different analogies. Ngugi uses “Darkness”, “threat”, “poison”, “night” in the poem’s title and in line 4 to allude the deadly pandemic which devastated humanity in Africans and installed social distancing. Taken separately, darkness points to the absence of light, the prevailing of uncertainty and the difficulty to perceive objects and their locations, thus the absence of references. Indeed, covid 19 caused the scientific world and the economic institutions to lose references as the right solution of the disease delayed. The poet sees the disease as a threat in that it rendered insecure people’s lives, deprogrammed health predictions and weakened business partnerships. Africa being in networks with other nations, the continent survived the pandemic but felt social consequences in terms of the remaking of values. The “hug” synonymous with friendship and brotherhood has disappeared in our daily habits. It has been replaced with barriers: face mask, hand sanitizer, one-meter distancing have become norms to live by in society, attitudes that problematize African lifestyle of community and gathering. Fragmentation, individualism, schism, and relativism which are the very hallmarks of postmodernism have found their way through and through African societies, disfiguring and deforming African lifestyle and values. The poet describes covid 19 as “the very thing that put a knife into the thing that held Africans together and caused them to fall apart”, to borrow Achebe’s expression (Achebe 1958: 67).

The pandemic has forced humans to think life differently. It has imposed on peoples the necessity to revisit values, to reorganise society otherwise to prevent the spread of the virus and maintain life. These new ways of organising the society falls into the postmodern logic of individualism, fragmentation and decentring. Life during covid period and postcovidian period will call for new ways and new habits to develop.

The use of the antiphrasis “dawn of darkness” in the poem’s title by Ngugi to designate “hope and recovery or resilience” is in line with the ethos of postmodern fiction as it demonstrates how the author wants the various modalities of form, pattern and self-reflexivity, collage, rhythm,



theme, and perspective in various combinations to work together to create, play with, ironize, and parody forms of meaning. “Dawn” there is the symbol of hope which is expected to emerge from the “darkness” the symbol of despair in covid 19 pandemic. The reason for activating the symbolic mode of significance in postmodern fiction is that Ngugi privileges metaphor as a way of exposing deeper reality about human nature in quest for new reference. In line with this, Gerhard Hoffmann (2005: 145) observes that symbols are used to fill gaps of knowledge that cannot be filled by rational explanation. To bend to critic to my purpose, the covid 19 pandemic has created many gaps in the understanding of people to the extent that some popular opinions saw the virus as a symbol of “the end of age”. Such gaps have widened to include the *void* (a crucial word in postmodern fiction), and the ambivalent suggestions of symbolic meaning have increased in uncertainty to a point where meaning includes covidian chaos and pure nonsense and where not the inherent meaning but the wilful perspective reigns absolute. Just as the reconstruction of covid-related health after its deconstruction demonstrates its irreplaceability as organizational matrix, so the reconstruction of the symbol of “dawn” reveals the lack of substitutes. The thought of the upcoming “dawn” gives force and allows for the unreal construction of broken hope in space and time. In its construction, the symbol is exemplary of the way postmodern narrative goes beyond the literal sense to touch the metaphorical. The fact that it deconstructs and yet reconstructs the most important indirect signifying mode of modernist fiction, the symbolic signification, demonstrates that there is continuity in discontinuity. (Gerhard Hoffmann 2005: 144-145)

### **- Cultural implications**

Ngugi adjoins the covid 19 pandemic to be paralyzing for African people due to the weight of culture on the continent. To that effect, he uses the verb “threatens” in line 2 to describe the alienation effect that the rupture with cultural habits of handshaking and hugging will entail. In line 6, he makes it transpire that the lockdown and social distancing measures adopted after it, will have paralyzed life due to many reasons. Africa is a culture-oriented society. Norms, values, practices and traditions define

and shape life. African societies are defined by their cultures. The removal of culture from the African implies the removal the soul of the African community. Africa is culture-based, culture-related and culture-constructed. From formal to informal events, people gather to celebrate, rejoice, mourn, weep, or commemorate events both happy and unhappy ones. To begin, communal gatherings including festivities, burial and funerals, naming ceremonies, Christian church services, Islamic prayers, weddings celebrations, school classes, market days, political campaigns, and other formal and informal events require gatherings of numerous people. For happy events, wedding celebrations that take place during the covid pandemic do not receive the same enthusiasm like those organised before with limited authorised number of people to attend, so that enjoyments seem to lose their full cultural meanings. For unhappy events, people lost their loved ones due to covid pandemic. The funerals not being allowed, the cultural connotations of such events run out of their contents. The poet deplores such artefacts but relocates the discourse within the scope of ethical reading, to give priority to life/health over culture-based values. In a 1991 interview with Simon During and Jany Lee, “The Third World Mainstream...” and in line with the culture of survival Ngugi asserts:

We eat, we wear clothes, we attract, we struggle with the nature, we struggle, we struggle for power; but the human being is also made of a heart, of a mind, and all those things are going on at the same time. – the social aspects as well as the psychic aspects of human personality (Ngugi 1991/2006: 299).

This statement implies that survival is important for Ngugi. The statement completes what is being said in the poems and translates Ngugi’s perception of the African as a socio-cultural being whose well-being is contingent upon surrounding political, economic, social factors as well as his inner emotions. Aware that the economic conditions can influence a person’s emotional well-being, Ngugi sees a prospective remedy should take into account both aspects.

Information flows and is conveyed during such gatherings. Not to say that the medias do not play their roles, but important consultations take

place and important decisions are taken during social gatherings. Social gatherings construct and maintain the spirit of brotherhood in the community. They reinforce the sense of belonging and combat loneliness, and the sense of isolation. The maxim “united we stand, divided we fall” better finds its contextual meaning in Africa. The cultural boundings are strong due to the elevated sense of community life. Traditional festivals are common practices in majority of all communities throughout Africa. Such festivals have spiritual and ontological importance for the communities who celebrate them, so that their absence create some kind of alienation in the minds of the people. Ngugi thinks that the imposition of barrier measures disorganised the community culturally speaking. But, due to the prevalence of life in its essence over cultural values (for one must live before thinking about culture), the poet brings forth the idea of “ethical reading”. It is an intelligible perception of priorities in the face of multiple values. Between two values one has to choose the most essential one. In the present condition, Ngugi recommends survival, that is the respect of barriers to prevent the rapid infection of the disease.

#### **- Economic implications**

Ngugi’s poetic language is charged with economic content that signals the economic implications of the covid disease in Africa. The economic implications of the covid 19 as Ngugi makes it transpire in the poem are the slowing down of economic activities leading to the fall of purchasing power of the citizens. The lockdown means that people cannot go to work freely, the result of which is the stagnation, immobilism of goods and services, the corollary of which is poverty, hunger and suffering. Majority of African population work in petty trading, farming and transports. Such economic activities being conducted on a daily basis, it becomes difficult for the actors in that sector to function without physical displacement. True that in Africa, the lockdown did not function as in European countries, and the poet makes a kind of plea for political leaders to alleviate the burden of restrictions to the poor peasants and workers. Economic life of a society determines the well-being of that society. Ngugi makes the point that when the society’s economy is well-off, that society is equally well-off. On the contrary when the economy is “sick”, the society is also sick and unwell. It becomes necessary to

establish the co-relationship between the economic conditions of the African societies during the pandemic and the level of their well-being. If covid 19 has given a severe blow to economic life around the world, Ngugi thinks that life can be reorganized differently to insure survival to African communities: this can be read metaphorically in line 22 “this darkness too will pass away”. A parallelism is established between economic alienation Africa went through during the colonial period and the current economic alienation caused by the covid 19. The contextual covidian economic alienation takes place when Africans do not enjoy the fruits of their economic activity due to the pandemic parameters. The virus according to the medias’ records was an importation of foreign virus which originally was not “produced” on the continent. In the phrases “disdaining nature” and “pissing poison” in line 9, it seems that Ngugi indicts the fact that Africans should become the economic suffer heads of foreign importation: “. Ngugi’s poem goes on to establish that the neo-colonial legacies of the economic domination of Africa by Europe parallels that of the covidian postulate. For one thing, Europe and China have to sell to Africa all the utilities of preventive and curative sanitation related to covid pandemic: face masks, hand sanitizers, curative medication, and most importantly the vaccine believed to preventive. The dialectics of economic exchanges between Africa and the West being unilaterally interest-motivated, the poet is reluctant into believing that Africa was not targeted by the release of the virus.

#### **- Political implications**

Ngugi brings to the reader’s notice the fact that covid pandemic can be read politically as an ideological tool to express western hegemony. The idea finds justification in lines 27 and 28 of the poem where he expresses the idea that Europe put on the agenda an imposed vaccination programme that is to be extended to Africa implying the desire to vaccinate the entire population: the words “pulsation” in line 27, “rediscovered” in line 28, are used symbolically to allude to the political implications of the vaccination. There are lots of controversies around the vaccine issue. Public opinion is divided as to whether the vaccine proposed by the Europeans is efficient to guarantee survival. While some claimed that the lack of pre-vaccinal tests could be dangerous if the

vaccine were applied on humans, others argued in favour of the emergency of action due to the rife state of the pandemic. The most thrilling argument that caused much turmoil was that Africans would be used as experimental guinea pigs for the testing of the covid vaccine. That relocated the debate within the scope of colonial and postcolonial critical discourses. To view Africans as suitable experimental subjects on whom the covid would be tested arose the unrelenting debate on colonialism that under-treated Africans as primitive subjects inferior to the colonial masters. Ngugi's objection of such deals is clearly expressed in the poem where he thinks that Africa should no more accept to be downgraded. If African in the meantime does not yet have a vaccine against the covid disease, there is hope for possible future innovations and the discovery of a vaccine.

### **3. The Metaphor of “Dawn” and the Postcovid Resilience**

The metaphor transcends the literal as a kind of language referring unambiguously to reality because all poetic signs for the literal can be shown to be metaphorical when more closely analysed. This view of language in general has met with the use of symbols (Christopher Butler 2002: 15). Dawn is the coming of the day, thus light. Ngugi thinks that beyond the expressive mode of covid 19 there is hope for total recovering. Human society strives on the ground of self-discovery, error and trial. Hope is built on the rejection of fatality, the negation of despair in the face of incertitude. “Dawn” as metaphor alludes to the post-covid life which Ngugi expects to be better. Although that life may slightly differ from the pre-covid one due to post-pandemic curative and preventive measures that will be recommended by sanitary organs, the idea that African spirit of solidarity, brotherhood will be restored creates in the poet a feeling of ease marked by the repetitive use of “again and again” in the line “we shall mett again and again”. The metaphor becomes even stronger as the poet punctuates the line with exclamation mark. The exclamation mark explains a strong stop, or an end that is strongly forced to take place. Ngugi uses it to express his belief in the possibility of conquering the pandemic “Dawn” is used in combination with other words “meet”, “talk”, “laugh”

which constitute the repertoire of resilience referring to the same reality.  
For Ngugi,  
This darkness too will pass away  
We shall meet again and again  
And talk about darkness and dawn  
Sing and laugh maybe even hug (Ngugi 2020).

Darkness and dawn, two antithetic concepts are juxtaposed in the same cluster of lines or paragraph to express certain parameters of postmodern condition: contrast. Contrasted values like health and sickness, life and death, hope and despair, loneliness and communality, express social life as a dichotomic reality. The poet also draws the reader's attention on the fact that human life and institutions that control that life are fragile. No condition is permanent. Covid has succeeded in testing medical and technological advancements so far considered as performant and secured. The difficulty to find an efficient vaccine and the scepticism of the population into accepting the vaccination mark out the idea of postmodernism as a dubitative era. Doubt and uncertainty in front of scientific discoveries punctuate the covidian African society as a postmodern one. Ngugi's poem invites critical thinking towards the possibility of re-imagining African society. The virus having put world nations on equal footing regarding the lack of cure of the disease and the frailty of life, it is plausible to re-imagine Africa a place where covidian remedy is found. Ngugi in an earlier study "Moving the Center: Struggle for Cultural Freedoms" (1993) had already formulated the wish to see Euro-American Center of knowledge as the only possible reference be moved toward other parts of the world, African included. It is observable through Ngugi's reflections that the disease did kill less people in Africa than on the other continents. The poet also thinks that the discovery of a vaccine against the virus may be an African prerogative.

The postmodern condition also requires that one resists in the face of adversity. Vision is the mission of fiction and in Ngugi's case, the fictional construction of covid should bring the reader to see through art, the possibility to escape the boredom, restriction, and precarity imposed by the lockdown. Vision also entails the ability to diagnose, identify, and

reshape circumstantial priorities. The poet unleashes this idea in the last four lines of the poem:

Nature and nurture locked in a green embrace  
Celebrating every pulsation of a common being  
Rediscovered and cherished for real  
In the light of darkness and the new dawn (Ngugi 2020: 1)

It follows that from Ngugi's perspective, humans are expected to come up from the covidian experience with more humanity and new values. The poet believes that the pandemic, though destructive in terms of the number of deaths it causes, nevertheless will have enabled people to meditate on the philosophy of life, to reconsider humanity. The pandemic will enable people to grow in experience and wisdom. Ngugi believes that for every misfortune that befalls man, there is a lesson to learn, sometimes collectively, sometimes individually. As the covid 19 is a collective experience, collective teachings will be learnt. To that effect, Ngugi uses tong twisters, "nature and nurture" in line 26 to allude to the experience. The two words are close in pronunciation but different in meaning. While nature refers to the state of things in the primacy essence of their being, "nurture" alludes to the action of caring for and protecting something while it is developing. In other words, Ngugi means that human nature needs external inputs to grow and become better. The covid pandemic to some extent serves to acquire more experience.

Ngugi has it that the violation of ethics puts into peril social peace while the pursuing of social justice enhances that peace. In Ngugi's thoughtline, an ethical reading is a reading that is intellectually balanced, morally relevant and socio-politically challenging. To take position one needs to consider and reflect on all aspects of the question. This is so because the problematic of the covid brought lots of controversies in the ranks of social actors, political leaders, medical experts and the population in general. Covid becomes a vexing question giving way to many speculative theories and tentative answers. Such speculations are:

1. The virus was intentionally invented by pharmaceutical labs;
2. Money and the increase of capital was the main motivation behind the creation of the virus;

3. There is a genocidal project behind the release of the virus and its subsequent vaccine;
4. Africans will be used as guinea pigs or experimental rats to test the vaccine.

Difficult to test the veracity of every hypothesis and even less to counter the progress of the virus or the stop the medical project of the vaccine, the common citizen is left with endless questions without answers in the turmoil of the covid.

Through the poem, Ngugi invites social actors, political leaders, scientists and health experts to consider the dialectics of responsibility, ethics, creative justice, and the promotion of peace in society. Peace is only attainable on condition that the four values are blended and act in the generative chain to lead to peace. In clearer terms, there is no justice without responsibility sharing and there is no peace without justice so that peace becomes the decimal with which every actor needs to graft his or her responsibility and actions. Thus, social justice is inseparable with responsibility and ethics. The power balance also comes into play in Ngugi's thinking for the poet condemns the abusive use of force to claim justice. Being an anti-imperialist and anticolonial writer, Ngugi's *Mooving the Center: A Struggle for Cultural Freedoms* (1993) summarizes the necessity to consider the rights of the subalterns, the minority groups, and the Third World citizens in general. Under the postmodern conditions, there should be pluralities of voices for democracy to profit all. By pushing African values to fragmented ends, social actors have to bear in mind that life still needs to continue, generations after the present ones. Ngugi's *Dreams of a Weaver Bird* (2016) also convey messages of responsibility and peace contained in the poem.

### **Levels of awareness**

By engaging the reader on the footpath of ethical reflections on the covid 19 experience, the poet implicitly addresses two important issues that: individual awareness and superior audience awareness. The individual awareness refers to the capacity of individual citizens to understand the emergency of action to preserve one's life and that of others. Individual awareness functions in the poem to draw the line between individual



value systems, whereas collective awareness marks out societal priorities in against the backdrop of ethical values. To be exact, Ngugi has it that individual awareness helps the individual to understand and perceive life as a superior value above cultural values defined by society. Here the personal pronoun “I” used to conjugate the verb “know” that opens the poem and is repeated in lines 6, 11, and 14 underscores that individual awareness. To “know” is to be aware. Ngugi expresses awareness in a gradation form, moving from individual to collective awareness. In a postmodern condition, individualism prevails over collectivism. It even conditions it: “We are because I am”. Such awareness raising crystallises Ngugi’s vision of an African society where collective welfare is predicated upon individual one. Therefore, to preserve the society, individuals should be aware of their values in the community. Collective awareness is expressed at communal level through the symbolic use of the pronoun “we”. When the poet says “we shall meet again”, he points at that sense of collectivism that strengthens individualism. Under the strain of the pandemic virus, collectivism is suspended in the primary/physical sense of the terms, but is lived and experienced through the mental perception of gathering. Here social media and the net are the technical tools through which community life in schools, universities and job services is lived. Formerly it was unimaginable to conceive African lifestyle without handshaking, accolades, and physical gathering. With the threat of the covid virus, life is rethought and redefined another way. Ngugi comments that, these very reorganizations and restructuring demands a collective adherence, hence collective awareness. Ngugi uses tone and rhythm to bring across the importance of awareness in the fight against covid 19. “Dawn of Darkness” is written in a poetic style with short lines ranging between two and four-word-lines. The poem’s tone is oratorical and conciliatory, for Ngugi seeks to reassure the reader and the audience of the possibility of alternative solutions. This is observable in lines 10 and 11 where Ngugi uses words with stressed and unstressed syllables: “embrace”, “cherished”. This poem can be read to an audience in the state of moral discomfort due to covid 19 damages. It can be read with in accompaniment of musical instruments like whistle and rattle. Also the reader’s tone should be reassuring, familiar. The musical instrument should be able to create a rhythm that consolidate the

poetic effect that Ngugi intends the poem to achieve: encouragement and moral support.

## Conclusion

Two key ideas emerge: covid 19 has enabled the revisitation of values and given the tune for postmodernism especially in Africa. Postmodernism is also an African reality. Through the covid 19 experiences, old values have given way to new ones. For the sake of survival, Africans have to drop some of their communal values et create new ones. Ngugi believes that life is a perpetual learning process and humans are in the born to learn. Humans make values. They can unmake them or reshape them to suit Values do not make humans. The prospect of rebirth and the resilience are possible beyond the shimmering despair of the pandemic. Change should be worked upon to be positive.

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