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Reconnecting with the American Wilderness Tradition: The Values of Wilderness in Ngugi's *Wizard of the Crow*.

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Abstract

This paper explores Ngugi's representation of the values of wilderness in his novel; ***Wizard of the Crow*** *(2006), following his observation that much of the criticism on Wizard of the Crow seems to be concerned only with politics, dictatorship, power, globalization, violence, women and the use of Gikuyu oral tradition. The writer examines the values of wilderness in the novel. The writer argues that in his articulation of the values of wilderness, Ngugi exploits some of the ideas or theoretical positions of American wilderness canonical figures such as Henry David Thoreau and John Muir which they laid down in the nineteenth century. For these wilderness advocates, wilderness is not a malevolent place but a benevolent one: a place of beauty, of refuge, of spiritual retreat, of medicinal properties, a site of social recreation, peace, freedom and harmony and should, therefore, be preserved. These values of wilderness advanced by American wilderness proponents occupy a dominant position in Wizard of the Crow and these ideas will constitute the theoretical plank in the analysis of the novel. The writer concludes that Ngugi is a wilderness advocate, re-visiting and continuing the age-long advocacy for wilderness started by Thoreau and others of the same stamp in the nineteenth century.*

Keywords: Ngugi, Thoreau, Muir, Kamiti, Nyawira, Values,

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Wilderness, America.

> The logical, historical conclusion of wilderness is in
> America. In the beginning, all the world was America.
>
> – John Dean, 69.

> In wildness is the preservation of the world.
>
> –Henry David Thoreau, "Walking", 112.

Introduction

The nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of a particular conception of wilderness that flourished in America, one which marked a radical shift from viewing wilderness as an economic resource, a threat and an obstacle to be conquered for the advancement of civilization. This variant of wilderness emerged through the ideas and thoughts of some American wilderness advocates. Championed by the philosopher of American wilderness thought, Henry David Thoreau (1817–62), publicized by his enthusiastic disciple, John Muir (1838–1914), followed later by Aldo Leopold (1887–1948) and Edward Abbey (1927–89) and others, these wilderness thinkers articulated distinctive ideas of wilderness and made a plea for its preservation that changed the idea of wilderness not only in American history and culture but also in those of some other nations of the world. A prime example of such ideas is the second epigraph above by Thoreau whose "ideas", according to Max Oelschlaeger, "are recognized as crucial to the birth of a distinctively American idea of wilderness" (133) and that "[c]entral to Thoreau's thought is his idea of wilderness and the natural life" (134).

Central to the position of wilderness thinkers is that wilderness is a natural space with intrinsic values to be preserved for what Muir calls "right use" (566) rather than a place with instrumental or utilitarian values to be exploited for human progress. The ideas and writings of these wilderness thinkers were indeed so crucial that they led to

wilderness preservation in America which later spread to other parts of the world. For instance, Lawrence Buell notes that it was "Thoreau's writings that led many to perceive wilderness[Walden Pond] as a sacred place that should be kept in its "natural state" (4). The same could be said, arguably, of Africa where laws are enacted to preserve sacred groves and forests. The ideas of these wilderness writers also provided an alternative perspective on the human-nature relation in environmental studies and literature, and contemporary writers and critics tend to treat them as the defining spirit of the wilderness tradition and, accordingly, draw from these ideas in their creative and critical works.

This is not to say that it is with Thoreau and his ilk that wilderness entered American or world literature. No. Long before them, wilderness had been a constant in American and other literatures of the world whether in biography, autobiography, discursive writing, the novel, poetry and drama. The position here is that in a full and distinctive sense of the wilderness tradition in literature, it is America that we refer to, as underscored by the first epigraph to this paper. Undoubtedly, it is in America that we find wilderness as a predominant theme in literature. As Buell points out, "[i]n American literature, the main canonical forms of environmental writing are wilderness romance and the lyric mediation on luminous natural image or scene" (85) which have been reiterated and re-inscribed from say, Washington Irving and James Fennimore to Josiah Greg and William Cullen Bryant.

But it was after Thoreau and others had laid out their distinctive ideas of the values of wilderness in the nineteenth century that the response of American writers to wilderness intensified, for it was after then that we saw the greatest outpouring of wilderness narratives in America, especially in the novel; Clifford D. Simak's *City* (1952), Thomas Disch's *The Genocide* (1965), Urula K. Le Guin's *The Word for the World Is Forest* (1972), Frank Herbert's *Destination: Void* (1978), Mary Hunter Austin's *Cactus Thorn: A Novella* (1991), Louis Owen's *Wolfsong* (1994), Jon Krakauer's *Into the Wild* (1989), and many of Abbey's novels such as *The Monkey Wrench Gang* (1975), *Hayduke Lives!* (1989) and *A Voice in the Wilderness* (1989) provide ample illustrations in a long line of American wilderness novels since Thoreau.

"As time passes," writes Charles Nnolim, "writers emerge who

take hold of a tradition and alter [or follow] it in a way never dreamt of in our projections" (173). This is true of Kenya's Ngugi wa Thiong'o who has taken hold of the American idea of wilderness and used it in his narratives. The writer's position in this paper is that in his representation of the values of wilderness in *Wizard of the Crow*, Ngugi utilizes some of the ideas or conceptual positions of American wilderness thinkers, to justify the title of this article: "Reconnecting with the American Wilderness Tradition". Indeed, Ngugi's concern with wilderness can be seen in his previous novels but it is in *Wizard of the Crow* that wilderness is most persuasively and most manifestly illustrated. Monumental, expansive and digressive, *Wizard of the Crow* deals with many issues across the world and it is perhaps for this reason that Dominic Thomas characterizes it as "a truly global novel" which "ignor[es] topographic limitations [and] leaps across boundaries and continents" (240) to explore its multiple concerns. One of the most interesting of these concerns, but which has, unfortunately, been ignored by critics is Ngugi's exposition of the values of wilderness following the American wilderness tradition.

This is not surprising particularly when it is borne in mind that in their creative works, African writers sometimes draw from Euro-Western literary tradition. As Kwesi Owusu observes, "[m]any African writers make their living from Afro-European literary tradition" (235). Nnolim echoes the same stance: "The black writer today owes much to European literary tradition … He is a product of two worlds – his African background and the European intellectual, historical and cultural experience" (28). Ngugi is no exception. Nurtured in Africa and Europe, Ngugi, like many other African writers, is acquainted with the Western literary tradition and he makes constant recourse to this tradition, in this case, the American wilderness tradition. As he himself says in an interview with Jane Wilkinson, he has read different kinds of literature, including "Afro-American literature [and] the literature of Europe … So the Afro-American literature has been part and parcel of my growing and developing consciousness" (213). And to two other interviewers who asked him to know the "kind of literary tradition" he grew "up in as a writer", Ngugi replies: "Obviously, I'm part of several traditions" (323), one of which is ostensibly his utilization of the American wilderness tradition in *Wizard of the Crow*.

Though for many people such as environmental historian William Cronon, the American conception of wilderness is a cultural construction and that " [i]n its raw state [wilderness] had little or nothing to offer civilized men and women" (9), the writer further argues that wilderness is a natural space or a biophysical reality with its own intrinsic values or what Roderick Nash calls "wilderness therapy" (266), that is, it has spiritual, emotional, aesthetic, political, medicinal and recreational values for humanity, as the analysis of the novel will show. And as Samuel P. Hays rightly observes, "Cronon's wilderness is a world of abstracted ideas, real enough to those who participate in it, but divorced from the values and ideas inherent in wilderness action" (31). Cronon must allow that apart from America, there are also vast wildernesses elsewhere in the world such as the Masai Mara Wilderness in Kenya, the Selous Wilderness in Tanzania and the Tewate Wilderness in South Africa all of which are natural spaces with intrinsic values.

II

Wilderness is generally used to refer to a vast, remote, uninhabited and uncultivated area filled with habitats and species. Its components include forests, rivers, streams, caves, hills, mountains, valleys, prairies, deserts, oceans, and even the outer space, excluding human beings and civilization, for according to Alison Byerly, "[t]he idea of wilderness refers to the absence of humanity" (50). Dean also makes the same point: "Wilderness is organically pre-human; it precedes civilization. Man enters in as a beast among beasts in the wilderness jungle" (69). According to Oelschlaeger, the term, "wilderness", is derived from the "Indo-European *welt* or *uelt* … meaning forest or wildwood" (356). As he defines it:

> *The term wilderness denotes different ecosystems – including grasslands, hardword or coniferous forests, mountains, and deserts – identified by such characteristics as having little or no economic value and consequently unhumanized or developed; also an unsettled or unpopulated region suited only to beasts; and a rugged, primitive area that lacks the amenities of civilization. Wilderness areas are often viewed as wasteland, barren, uninhabitable, desert, or otherwise*

> *distinguished from land suited to human development in the name of economic progress and civilization* (356).

The above presents wilderness as a non-human world, a threat and untrammeled by human activity. It must be pointed out here that, like many other concepts, wilderness has no universally acceptable definition and this makes it difficult to measure its value. Admittedly, this is because of the age-long duality in attitude toward wilderness evident in the way different cultures view wilderness differently. For some cultures, wilderness is a valuable and benevolent space while for others, it is a malevolent place where nothing but evil resides. In the words of Jacques Pouchepadass:

> *Cultural perceptions of the forest [wilderness] are always ambiguous. On the one hand, [it] is a generous provider of plants and animal resources, a space for freedom, pleasure and adventure, a refuge against the evils of war or the contradictions of society, and a place of spiritual retreat, of regeneration, of salvation… On the other hand, [it] is viewed as the land of the unknown and unpredictable, inhabited by outlaws and wild tribes, and a haunted space, the abode of threatening and undominated forces, demons, or the spirits of the dead. It is the "other side", against whose dangerous intrusions men and communities have to protect themselves (2061).*

These are the ambivalent views of forest wilderness held by different cultures over the years and, for those cultures that view wilderness as a good place, it is to be appreciated and preserved while for those that see it as evil, wilderness is to be domesticated for human progress.

III

As we have just seen, prior to the emergence of the American variant of wilderness in the nineteenth century, there have been different views of wilderness such as the Paleolithic and the Neolithic views but the predominant one in Europe and the West as well as in most other parts of the world was the Judeo-Christian view. As Greg Garrard explains, "the meanings with which wilderness was endowed at the beginning of the eighteenth century seem to be based almost entirely on Judeo-Christian history and culture" (60). In no other source do we find

the strongest use of the word, "wilderness" than in the Bible where Nash says it occurs nearly three hundred times (3) and in all the instances where it occurs, wilderness is presented with contrasting perceptions. It is the Bible and, therefore, the Judeo-Christians that mostly view wilderness with ambivalence. In one breath, they see wilderness as a place of trials, dangers, threat and hostility, and following God's first commandment to man in Genesis 1:28: "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over… everything that moveth upon the earth",
wilderness becomes, for the Judeo-Christians, something to be exploited for man's benefit. But in another breath, wilderness is for them a place of refuge, sanctity, purity and spiritual uplift. This echoes aspects of the American idea of wilderness for which Cronon argues that it is rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

The Puritan colonists' conception of wilderness was even worse than the Judeo-Christians', for they "held strongly antagonistic view toward wilderness" (George H. Stankey, 17) after fleeing to the New World to escape religious persecution. Citing Roderick Nash and Perry Miller, Gordon M. Sayre notes that "seventeenth-century Puritan colonists regarded wilderness with dread, as the domain of wolves and tempting demons" (104) and so they see wilderness as an enemy to be crushed. On this point, Nash writes in another essay: "[T]he pioneer [colonists] expressed their relation to wilderness with a military metaphor: wild country was an "enemy" to be "conquered", "subdued", or "vanquished" by a "pioneer army" (3) who happens to be the colonists themselves. Euro-Western literatures and Africa's colonizers also view Africa and African wilderness areas in the same way: as "the other world" where dangers lurk but with rich natural resources to be exploited or domesticated for the colonizer's benefit (Nicholletta Brazelli, 151; Catherine Addison, 117). The upshot of the foregoing discussion is that up till the nineteenth century, wilderness was generally viewed as an economic resource, an enemy, a threat and an obstacle to be harnessed in the service of human progress. Given these conceptions, wilderness was not considered to be a place with intrinsic values.

However, with the emergence of the American idea of wilderness in the nineteenth century, the above understandings of wilderness changed to one which sees wilderness as a space with

intrinsic values. About this, Oelschlaeger writes: "The nineteenth century marked the beginning of an important change in the meaning of wilderness… a shift transpired from viewing wild nature as merely a valuable resource … an obstacle… toward a conception of wilderness as an end in its own right and an endangered species in need of preservation" (4). There were many factors that animated this change in conception which will not be pursued too far here but the most far-reaching and profound were the idea of the English Romantic sublime and primitivism, a new appreciation and a love of wilderness, a revision of the Judeo-Christian view of wilderness, the awareness that civilization cannot provide for the mental and spiritual life of man, loss in seen wilderness as a fearful space, the vanishing of the American frontier, the trend of Euro-Western civilization toward destroying wild country, and most especially the distinctive ideas of the American Transcendentalists such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Thoreau, Muir and others about nature or wilderness.

As John Copeland Nagle writes of some of these factors, "[n]ineteenth century America witnessed the beginning of a change in the understanding of wilderness. Three trends coincided: a growing scarcity of wilderness lands, a nascent appreciation of wilderness and the beginning of an uncoupling of theological and ethical views of wilderness" (974; see also Nash, 1963 and Stankey, 1989). It was also in the nineteenth century that the view that wilderness is a wasteland changed. As Cronon avers, prior to "250 years in American and European history wilderness meant "deserted," "savage," "desolate," "barren" – in short, a "waste" (8). "By the end of the nineteenth century," Cronon continues, "all this had changed". According to Cronon, "[t]hat Thoreau in 1862 could declare wildness to be the preservation of the world suggests the sea of change that was going on" (9) in America and in some other parts of the world.

Thoreau's famous declaration that suggested a shift in the conception of wilderness is also supported his mentor, Emerson, who states: "In the woods, we return to reason and faith. There, I feel that nothing can befall me in life – no disgrace, no calamity" (6). And this, by Samuel H. Hammond: "Give a month to the enjoyment of wilderness-life, and you will return to your labor invigorated in strength, buoyant in spirit – a wiser, healthier and better man" (341). Then, this by John Muir

: “Going to the woods is going home; for I suppose we came from the woods originally” (33). Such ideas and the factors mentioned above brought about a new awareness of value in wilderness and the old ways of seeing wilderness as a threat, a wasteland and a place with utilitarian value or for economic use began to wane gradually. As Nash affirms succinctly: “Ideas such as these suggested a non-utilitarian value for wilderness” (4) but suggested intrinsic values for it.

It is against the foregoing background that the American idea of wilderness emerged in the nineteenth century and from this time on, wilderness acquired a new meaning not only to Americans but also to some other people of the world. For some Americans, as for some other people, wilderness represents what Rob Nixon calls one of the “'uncorrupted', last great places” (236) where civilization has not touched and where mankind can find solace from the contradictions of society. Similarly, for some, there is no boundary between civilization and wilderness but that there is rather a reciprocal human-wilderness relationship. If wilderness was previously viewed as an economic resource and as a repulsive and fearful place, it is now a paradisal space. Put simply, wilderness, for its advocates, is a benevolent place: a place of beauty, of refuge, a space with political and medicinal values, a site of spiritual renewal, of social recreation, peace, freedom and harmony. Interestingly, these values of wilderness articulated by American wilderness thinkers occupy a prominent place in Ngugi's *Wizard of the Crow*, as will be shown soon.

IV

Earlier in this discourse, we had made the point that *Wizard of the Crow* is not the first work in which Ngugi has shown his concern with wilderness, and that the trend echoes throughout his novels. In *Weep Not, Child* (1964), for instance, Ngugi portrays East Africa as a place with beautiful and fertile forest wilderness containing different game, and for the colonist, Mr. Howland, he escaped to East Africa after the World War 1 because it “was a big trace of wild country to conquer” (30). And in his relationship with Ngotho, Mr. Howland sees Ngotho's land as an “unoccupied wildness” (31) to be tamed. This smacks of the way colonists view Africa and its empty spaces as in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness.*

We are privy to Ngugi's concern with forest wilderness in *The River Between* (1965) when Chege takes Waiyaki through the sacred grove or hills as part of Waiyaki's initiation into the secrets of the community. In a *Grain of Wheat* (1971), the reader sees the wilderness landscape of Nyeri as one "full of mountains, hills and deep valleys with impenetrable forests" (49) all of which fascinates the colonial master, Thompson. There are also the Kinenie Forest and Githima Forest, and the latter is so beautiful that it attracted the colonists to live there and also set up the Githima Forestry Station as "part of a new colonial developmental plan" (31). In another novel, *Petals of Blood* (1977), Ngugi continues to explore wilderness by setting most of the novel's action in an ancient village IImorog with "a vast wilderness" (129). And in *Matigari* (1987), too, part of the novel's action is set in forest wilderness where the war between Settler Williams and Matigari is fought, and when Matigari fails in his search to find truth and justice in market places, crossroads and so on, "he went into the wilderness" (86). In all of these novels, Ngugi represents wilderness as a place with some of the previously mentioned values, culminating, as he advances in his writing career, in *Wizard of the Crow* where we see a sustained representational density of values of wilderness, as I demonstrate in the rest of this paper.

To begin with, Ngugi evokes the wilderness of a fictitious country named Aburiria, a surreal for Kenya where the novel's action is broadly set. The capital of Aburiria is Eldares described as "a big city [with] several towns in one" (325) and it is at the outskirts of Eldares that the wilderness is found. So obsessed is Ngugi with wilderness essence that the term, "wilderness" is ubiquitous in the novel, repeated no fewer than twenty times. Here are a few examples: "…what came out was a whistling reminiscent of the song of the birds he had listened to in the morning in the wilderness" (38); "Satan who had appeared before the garbage collectors in the wilderness" (43); "…but then, in the wilderness, deep in the forests away from Eldares, the smell was absent no matter how hungry, thirsty and tired he was" (49); "I will follow in the footsteps of John the Baptist and make my bed in the wilderness" (86); "You won't have to go to the wilderness" (93); "But let us first eat something before you begin your journey into the wilderness" (124)

; “Don't go to the wilderness tonight” (125) and so on. As Tom Adair avers, *Wizard of the Crow* is “a marvelous evocation of wilderness” (4).

Throughout the novel, it is with Kamiti, the titular hero, that wilderness is mostly associated, an association which shows that Kamiti has a strong bond or affinity with wilderness and by the time he finally retreats from the city into the wilderness to envision himself by living “the life of a hermit” (207), his affinity with wilderness becomes the means through which he discovers or finds his identity. It is through Kamiti and his wife Nyawira that Ngugi sets the stage for an engaging, interesting and a sustained exploration of the values of wilderness espoused by American wilderness proponents. The first way he does this is to represent wilderness as home and as escape, a place where those who are tired of the city or civilization can turn to and find peace. As far back as 1870, Muir tells us that for those who are tired of civilization, “going to the mountains is going home; wildness is a necessity” (2) and in *Desert Solitaire* (1968), Abbey views wilderness as “escape” and as “home” (qtd in Joni Adamson, 35). Given this understanding, there is a wilderness-and-pastoral mix here, for ecocritics agree that wilderness and pastoral are natural worlds to which city dwellers who are tired of the city return to find peace (Leo Marx, 5; Glen Love, 65–78; Greg Garrad, 59 and Terry Gifford, 12).

Ngugi exploits this idea of wilderness and he shows it through Kamiti. Described as “dark, tall and slim” (51), and always in a grey suit, Kamiti holds a BA in Economics and Master of Business Management from an Indian University. He has also studied “herbology, the study of medicinal properties and plants” (57) in India but despite his advanced degrees, Kamiti is jobless in his village, Kiambugi. To earn a living, he moves to the city in search of jobs but finds none and he begins to live the life of a beggar. In his bid to escape from his woes in the city, Kamiti goes on astral travel, lying half-dead on a heap of garbage in a dumpsite in the city and it is at this point that we first met him. Thereafter, Kamiti straddles city and wilderness. As in the city, while in the wilderness, Kamiti further goes on astral travel as relief from his sufferings and at dawn, “he would feel his spirit imbued with fresh energy” (47) and he returns to the city, “knocking at every door, hoping for something that would improve his life” (47) only to retreat into the wilderness and back

to the city time and again.

Kamiti continues with this archetypal pattern of retreat and return until, tired of his joblessness and what he calls the "stench of corruption" (210) in the city (a city characterized by corruption and greed, stench, unemployment, overpopulation, noise, death and destruction, power or political struggle and exploitation), he finally retreats into the wilderness, which he sees as home, as a form of escape. As he tells Nyawira, he decided to "Flee Eldares. Abandon human community for the wilderness" in order "to escape the stink" (208) and other contradictions of the city to find peace in the wilderness. With his pastoral escape into the wilderness away from the corrupt world of the city, from the Ruler and his cohorts, Kamiti sees nothing but only an earthly paradise as the wilderness is "enveloped in the magic of love and wild beauty" (216). Kamiti's retreat here is reminiscent of some persons of great renown who also retreat into the wilderness in order to escape from the harsh realities of their worlds and to find peace. Kamiti himself provides the reader with a list of some of such people to justify his own retreat into the wilderness: Confucius of China, Gautama Buddha of India, Moses and John the Baptist of the Christian religion, and Mugo wa Kibiru of Kenya.

Similarly, when Niccolo Machiavelli left prison in 1513 and tried to secure employment in Pope Leo X's government through his erstwhile colleague, Francesco Vettori, who was either "unable or unwilling to help", Machiavelli became discouraged and withdrew to his little farm at Sant' Andrea in order "to be at a distance from human face" (Skinner Quentin, 24). To move away from civilized life and "to front only the essential facts of life" (95), Thoreau retreated into the woods in 1845 and built a cabin on Walden Pond where he lived alone for over two years and it is his experiences in that space that he recreates in his most supreme work, *Walden, or Life in the Woods* (1854). In all, Kamiti's retreat into the wilderness as a form of escape from the pollution and contradictions of the city follows the English and Romantic views of humanity's return to nature or wilderness which Ngugi, too, is advocating. As Jonathan Bate points out, [t]he traditional view of the Romantic return to nature is escapism. Wordsworth escapes to the Lake District to get away from the harsh realities of the Terror; the Victorian Romantics escape into a world of medievalism to get away

from laissez-faire capitalism and grimy factories" (52). For Kamiti, as for the above-mentioned figures and others of the same stamp, nature or wilderness is not only a place to find peace but also a place of power and renewal.

Allied to the above values are what Muir calls "higher values" (2) of wilderness: beauty and recreation. Wilderness thinkers from Thoreau to Abbey usually extol and celebrate the beauty and recreational values of wilderness and it is for this reason that figures like Thoreau hiked in the wilderness of northern Maine and Muir, in the wild areas of the southeast, Yosemite and Alaska. Extolling wilderness, Robert D. Beard says that it is a place "where we can sit and enjoy the beauty of God's creation" (qtd in Nagle, 983). Pointing to the recreational value of wilderness, Thoreau writes: "When I would recreate myself, I seek the darkest wood, the thickest and most interminable… most dismal swamp. I enter a swamp as a sacred place, a *sanctum sanctorum.* There is the strength, the marrow of Nature" (Walking", 116). Ngugi appears prompted by similar ideas for beauty, recreation and love of wilderness as the dominant concerns of *Wizard of the Crow.* If, for an illustration, in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* we see a "perilous [wilderness]" (338), one "noted in the fourteenth century for criminals and outlaws" (304) and in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness,* a turbulent "God-forsaken wilderness" (19) which contains "the stillness of an implacable force brooding over an inscrutable intention" and which "looked at you with a vengeful aspect (48-49), in *Wizard of the Crow,* we find a wilderness of beauty, recreation and love.

Of its beauty, the wilderness in the novel is characterized by breathtaking forests, a vast prairie, mountains, hills, caves, bushes, valleys, ridges, birds, animals and rivers. For instance, when Nyawira returns home from work and finds that Kamiti has suddenly left her house for the wilderness and she goes in search of him through the prairie around Eldares, what we see is a prairie consisting of beautiful "ridges, hills and mountains"(201), and like the tarmac road in *Weep Not, Child,* the prairie has "no beginning or end" (202). Sometimes when the wind sweeps the mist away in the prairie, the narrator tells us that "the ridges, hills and mountains would reveal their *breathtaking beauty*, sun rays dappling the forest with their mellow leaves of green, yellow and orange. Sometimes when the sun is rising or sinking one can

glimpse a rainbow arched over the hills" (201, emphasis mine). During the night, the prairie shines with the elements of the sky scape such as the stars which guide Nyawira during her flight into the mountains when she is hunted by the State. While sitting on "a tree stump at the side of [a] hill" (202), searching for Kamiti, Nyawira finds him and he leads her "farther up into the bush to a grassy moor surrounded by piles of gray stones, almost like a courtyard, leading "her into a rocky cave" (203), presumably Kamiti's house where he has settled in when he retreatS from the city into the wilderness.

Soon afterwards, they begin to recreate their love relationship. Like Gikonyo, who makes love for the first time to Mumbi on the grass in Kinenie Forest in *A Grain of Wheat,* and Munira, who does same to Wanja in the IImorog wilderness in *Petals of Blood,* Kamiti also makes love to Nyawira in the cave in the wilderness:

> *On the ground, in the cave, now wrapped in darkness, they found themselves airborne over hills and valleys, floating through blue clouds to the mountaintops of pure ecstasy, from where, suspended in space, they felt the world go round before they descended, sliding down a rainbow, toward the earth, their earth, where the grass, plants, and animals seemed to be singing a lullaby of silence as Nyawira and Kamiti, now locked in each other's arms, slept the sleep of babies, the dawn of a new day awaiting (203).*

This passage is a pure description of the beauty of wilderness landscape, one with natural elements such as caves, hills, valleys, mountains, rainbows, grass, plants and animals in and among which human beings not only live but also recreate themselves.

Ngugi continues to show the beauty of the wilderness when in the morning, Kamiti takes Nyawira to a stream around the cave with a "clear and cold, almost numbing" (204) water to have their bath. Thereafter, they recreate themselves as Kamiti takes Nyawira to hike in the wilderness, playing and singing about animals. They also "commune with each other and nature", feeling "good at peace amid nature's bounty" (205). Indeed, they display a strong responsiveness to the provisions of nature in the wilderness. Away from the cruel, over-populated, turbulent, anxiety-and-hate-ridden, industrialized, polluted

and violent city, Kamiti and Nyawira find beauty, peace and love in the wilderness exemplified in the following remarkable passage quoted in entirety:

> *Love was everywhere: in the tree branches where the nests of weaverbirds hung; in the fern where the widowbird had left two long black tail feathers; in the murmurings of the Eldares River as it flowed eastward before turning into a roaring waterfall; in the sun's rays, which pierced through the waterfall, splitting into the seven colours of the rainbow; in the still waters of a small lake by the river where Kamiti and Nyawira now swam and bathed and chased each other, splashing waters on each other; in the blackjacks, the goosegrass and other plants, the flowers and seeds of which stuck to their wet clothes; in the movement of porcupines and hedgehogs; in the wings of the helmeted and crested guinea fowls, francolins that scampered away after stealing glances at the couple; in the honeybees and butterflies hopping from flower to flower; in the cooing of the doves; in the mating calls of the river frogs from among the reeds and water lilies. Love was among the creeping plants that twined around the tree trunks; yes, in the blackberries, some of which they plucked and fed to each other. Love was there in the breeze that made the leaves sway ever so gently. Love was everywhere in this forest (205-206).*

Here, the wilderness is many things. It is an enlivening and erotic one dominated by non-human creatures: trees, waterfallS, birds, animals, insects, plants and fruits all bringing to mind the artist's impressions of the Garden of Eden in children's Bible story books. It is a wilderness with nature's promise of love, joy, fullness, richness, paradise on earth, and one where man is stripped naked of the inessentials of life, of his worries, of troubles and civilization. It is also a wilderness in its idyllic and natural state which stands squarely in contrast to that of the Ruler and his cohorts in the city where money and power are their gods. It is this idyllic world that Kamiti and Nyawira hope to achieve in the future by re-ordering Aburiria without exploitative values. According to Brady Smith, the above passage "functions as a retelling of the Gikuyu creation

myth, with Kamiti and Nyawira as latter-day versions of Gikuyu and Mumbi, the Gikuyu Adam and Eve" (173). In Gikuyu creation myth which features in much of Ngugi's narratives, especially in *The River Between,* we are told that Gikuyu and Mumbi are the founding parents of the Gikuyu tribe, ruling over the land.

Valley is a significant part of wilderness and in the Eldares wilderness, around the cornfields in Tajirika's house is a "boggy marshy valley floor" where "a pool" (441) or the "Museum of Arrested Motion" (443) later erupts. Here, too, we see beauty and recreational values of wilderness and the scene offers one of the best examples of magic realism in the novel. Unaware that it is Minister Sikiokuu who has been setting up plots against him, Tajirika mistakenly suspects his wife Vinjinia as the person who has orchestrated his abduction and imprisonment by Sikiokuu and John Kaniuru. On his release from prison, Tajirika returns home to beat his wife mercilessly and this causes strains in their marriage. Afraid that their marriage would collapse as a result of the rift between them, Tajirika and Vinjinia one day decide to walk to their favourite spot, the cornfields within the valley around their house and weep for each other until their tears form a small lake on the spot. Just at that moment they find new beginnings in their relationship as each dips fingers in turn into the lake of tears and put the salty tears into each other's tongue. Soon afterwards, Vinjinia runs into the cornfields and Tajirika follows "her in a playful chase", and there in the cornfields:

> *They at once succumbed to the fatigue of it all and suddenly felt the kind of warmth they used to arouse in each other in the days of their youth: for a moment they stood looking at each other, mesmerized by what was happening to them. They knew rather than talked about it. But there in the open fields, under the corn leaves, it felt good, very good, and for a few minutes the pain of the bruises on their faces and on their hearts seemed soothed away by the sweetness that whistled tunes ending in a rapturous crescendo (442).*

The passage shows a quarrelling couple reconciling their differences by playing out their old loving relationship within the valley under corn leaves. Returning to the site the next day, Tajirika and

Vinjinia find a beautiful and wonderful museum where animals are in a frozen state and time is suspended: "a flock of birds was frozen in flight above the lake. Some yards into the pool, a dog, barking at the birds, suddenly froze before their very eyes" (442). This site moves Tajirika and his wife to moments of ecstasy, moving their reconciliation even further.

Thinking these had vanished, they again return to the site the following day only to find in addition, "bees and butterflies also in frozen flight. On the surface, ducks and chickens, including a cock trying to mount a hen, were all frozen in motion. So also two antelopes, one in the air and the other about to jump" (442). From this time on, Tajirika and Vinjinia make the Museum of Arrested Motion their place of relaxation and recreation, and where they finally reconcile their estranged relationship as they talk and identify Sikiokuu's treachery as the source of their differences!

Finally, we further see the beauty and recreational values of wilderness in the novel after Kamiti's recovery in the wilderness from the bullet injuries he sustains from Kaniuru on the Day of National Rebirth or Self-Renewal/the Ruler's Second Birthday. While in the wilderness, Kamiti and Nyawira walk "in the woods" (721) and "along the banks of Eldares till they came to a waterfall" (722). In addition, they relate with non-human forms such as birds, engaging each other in a contest to use their powers of sorcery to bring down a bird perching on a tree, with Nyawira winning the contest when she uses crumbs of bread and "mumble[s] some incantation" (723) to bring down the bird. Soon after this Nyawira runs to a river described by the narrator as "Beautiful. Radiant. Graceful. Glorious" (723) and she is later joined by Kamiti, splashing water on each other and stroking themselves. They continue to play and recreate themselves in this manner and end up "lying down by the riverside on green grass under the side of [a] shrub" (723).

Throughout human history wilderness has been viewed as a place of refuge. In the American wilderness canon, it is Abbey who Don Scheese characterizes as the "most radical, iconoclastic figure" (315) that advocates both love of wilderness and political activism of wilderness. It is Abbey who tells us that wilderness has political value for mankind because it provides a means of political freedom and a haven for resistance against totalitarian regimes. As he explains it, wilderness serves "as a refuge from authoritarian government" and,

echoing Thoreau, Abbey declares: "[I]n wildness also lay the hope for the continued preservation of political freedom in the world" (qtd in Don Scheese, 310/311). Abbey grounds his thesis by citing Vietnam, Cuba and Algeria as examples of countries with vast wildernesses which guerrilla fighters use as haven to fight against totalitarian regimes. Explaining on this political value of wilderness, Michael Beilfuss also writes that "[t]he wilderness refuge [for the American slaves] was not merely a temporary relief from the struggles of day-to-day… but a refuge that operated as a resistance to "economic subordination and dependency" (499).

This political value of wilderness as a place of refuge manifests in *Wizard of the Crow* in many ways. Ngugi himself underscores this fact by describing "the hills and forests [in the wilderness] as political hideouts" (264) for the oppressed characters fighting against the Ruler's authoritarian government. In fact, in representing wilderness as a place of refuge, the author feminizes the wilderness as "a symbol of maternal comfort and female strength" where the exploited characters go for "inspiration and respite from submission to patriarchal demands" (Andrea Blair, 119). The earliest manifestation of wilderness as a place of refuge in the novel comes when Nyawira and Kamiti are pursued by the police from Paradise Hotel where the State was hosting the Global Bank officials and Nyawira and Kamiti escaped through the prairie. To draw the attention of the Global Bank officials to the sufferings of the Aburirians, Nyawira had led the Movement for the Voice of the People, all disguised as beggars, to Paradise Hotel. Driven by hunger, Kamiti has also gone to beg in front of Paradise Hotel. When the disguised beggars chant slogans against the government and disrupt the occasion, the police attack them. To escape danger, Kamiti and Nyawira escape through the prairie surrounding Eldares but they are chased by three policemen in the prairie. Aware of the geography of the prairie, Kamiti and Nyawira are able to confuse one of the policemen named Constable Arigaigai, alias A.G., by "running him in circles" (76) and subsequently escaping to Nyawira's house where they put up the wizard's signpost to scare A.G. away.

Again, when Nyawira is hunted by the police for disrupting the dedication of the site of Marching to Heaven, it is to the mountains in the wilderness that she flees to take refuge with her husband Kamiti who

houses her in a "rudimentary shelter under a sycamore tree" (264). Furthermore, we are told that during the anti-colonial struggle in Kenya, the forests and mountains serve as refuge from which the Mau Mau fighters wage the war of independence against the British forces. Living with the fighters in the forests and mountains is Kamiti's grandfather, Kamiti wa Kienjeku, a holy seer and spiritual leader who teaches them "how to be at peace with one another, settling conflicts, leading units into battle, and cleansing them of evil after their engagement with the enemy" (294).

These apart, Ngugi further portrays the political value of wilderness through the way the underground resistance movement, the Movement for the Voice of the People, retreats into the wilderness as an ally, a sanctuary, a refuge, and a potential launching ground to counter the Ruler's government. Stung to indignation by the manner the Ruler and his cohorts misrule Aburiria, Nyawira and her kindred spirits formed this Movement to Resist and Subvert the Ruler's government. It is a non-violent movement much like India's Mahatma Gandhi's version of *Ahimsa* (non-violence), called *Satyagraha.* Operating through offstage techniques, the Movement is a character of its own and, according to Jayetta Slawson, it speaks as "the voice of the people" (51). In the words of the narrator, the Movement wants "the return of their collective voice" (666) and "to reverse" the order where the capitalists reap where they "never planted" and divide the country "along ethnic and sometimes gender and religious lines" (726). With the formation of the Movement, the Ruler becomes threatened because the political landscape of Aburiria has been altered. While the Free Republic of Aburiria is headed by the Ruler and his ruling clique, the Movement is headed by Nyawira. As secretary to Tajirika, one of the top functionaries in the Ruler's government, Nyawira is also the link between the Movement and what goes on in the Ruler's government.

Consisting of men and women, the Movement establishes a government of its own in the various caves, forests, mountains and hills in the wilderness. Operating from these spaces in the wilderness the members of the Movement come to Eldares again and again to disrupt all the State functions organized by the Ruler and his men, and they retreat again into these places in the wilderness. The Movement has its own radio nicknamed the Bush Telegraph to counter the claims of the

Ruler's radio, the Dictator's Mouthpiece. It also sets up the People's Assembly and the Aburiria People's Resistance Movement with Nyawira doubling as the Chairperson and Commander-in-Chief. In addition, the Movement has a library and a hospital with a medical doctor, Dr. Patel. Its members are all intellectuals reminiscent of the blacks in *Petals of Blood* who return from the World War II that have "grown wiser retreated to the forest and to the mountains to reform their broken lines…armed with pangas, and spears and guns and faith" (225) to fight the colonial government.

The activities of the Movement for the Voice of the People bring to mind those of the Mau Mau guerrilla fighters such as Boro and Kamau in *Weep Not, Child*; Kihika, General R. and Lt. Koinandu in *A Grain of Wheat*; Ole Masai, Abdulla, Karega, Nding'uri, Stanley Mathenge and Dedan Kimathi in *Petals of Blood*, and Matigari in *Matigari* who all wage their wars against the British government from the forests to reclaim their lost lands. They also call to mind the activities of the Green belt Movement founded in 1977 by Kenya's human and environmental rights campaigner, the late Wangari Maathai, in response to the environmental challenges posed by the country's ex-President Daniel arap Moi's regime.

Next is the economic value of wilderness. Wilderness advocates are aware that wilderness contains valuable economic resources and that they are not against the use of wilderness. What they are against is the view that wilderness is basically a raw material with utilitarian value to be destroyed for human progress. Admittedly, wilderness proponents stress Muir's doctrine of "right use" (566) of wilderness and its preservation. The proponents believe that if rightly used, wilderness will help to sustain and preserve the world. In *Wizard of the Crow*, the wilderness is partly represented along this line of thinking: a place with valuable economic resources which fosters "the preservation of the world" of Aburiria, to borrow Thoreau's words. This is because the Aburirian wilderness provides the people with food, plants, animal and mineral resources, and fertile lands. The following passage which opens Chapter 20, Section Two of Book Two titled: "Queuing Daemons" partly tells the story:

> *There was a time when the prairie surrounding Eldares was the domain of wild animals: rhinos, elephants, and*

> *hippos. In those days a traveler was likely to find leopards and lions lying in the grass waiting for their prey among the grazing herds of zebras, dik-diks, duikers, bushbucks, gazelles, impalas, kudus, elands, wartdogs, hartebeests and buffalo. A common sight was that of giraffes loping along or simply towering over the thorn-trees of the prairie. Occasionally an ostrich would scuttle across the prairie, and if a traveler was lucky he might find a newly laid ostrich egg inside a sand nest (201).*

This passage is a recollection of Aburirian distant past in which the people lived in harmony and in abundance, with the prairie or wilderness. The prairie is portrayed as having high economic value because of its rich flora and fauna which provide a source of livelihood and sustenance to the people. For them, the prairie is a valuable thing to be cherished and preserved, and it has been so preserved for centuries. But for the Ruler and his Western allies, the prairie is a raw material to be harnessed for human civilization. Accordingly, the Ruler, in alliance with Western powers, exploits and destroys the prairie for selfish gains. In addition to the rich natural habitats of the prairie, the narrator tells us that of the five regions which make up Aburiria – north, west, east, south and central, northern Aburiria has mountain wilderness rich in natural resources such as oil, gold and diamond. Applying to the northern Aburiria wilderness the same utilitarian criterion as the Eldares prairie, the Americans lure Tajirika to sign "agreements with several oil companies to explore oil and natural gas at the coast and mining companies to prospect for gold, diamond and other precious metals in northern Aburiria" (710), thereby destroying the space, an act antithetical to the positions of wilderness thinkers.

Another value of wilderness which Ngugi explores in *Wizard of the Crow* is medicinal value. Writing long ago on this value of wilderness, Thoreau declared: "From the forest and wilderness come the tonics and barks which brace mankind" ("Walking", 112). In his novel, Ngugi gives expression to this medicinal value of wilderness through the way Kamiti collects some medicinal roots, leaves and barks from the prairie surrounding Nyawira's house to cure an old man suffering "from a big stomach ache" (130). This brings to mind a similar way Abdulla

and Njuguna collect eucalyptus roots and leaves from the forest wilderness in *Petals of Blood* to treat Joseph who falls sick out of exhaustion during the peasants' journey through the forest to Nairobi.

There is also in *Wizard of the Crow* the spiritual values of wilderness. From the pre-biblical times to the present, wilderness has been recognized as a place of spiritual values: a place of encountering the Divine Being, of spiritual revival and regeneration, of spiritual testing and education, of redemption and the acquisition of spiritual and supernatural powers, etc. Of all the values of wilderness, the one that wilderness advocates such as "Thoreau deems most important is spiritual" (Nash, 88) which is akin to religious and mystical experience. For them, wilderness is where God is manifested and where spiritual recreation can take place. And they tirelessly reiterate and advance this as the basis for wilderness preservation. In "the majestic features of the uncultivated wilderness", writes Thaddeus Mason Harris, "we convene with God" (60). For Muir, "the wilderness was God's temple where His works were mostly displayed before man" (Nash, 8). By God's "works", Muir means the various features of the wilderness which are believed to have spiritual powers. While testifying to the spiritual values of wilderness before Congress preceding the enactment of the American Wilderness Act 1964, Robert E. Landsburg says that wilderness provides "spiritual refreshment and a deeper comprehension of our existence" (qtd in Nagle, 984). These statements will do to illustrate the spiritual values of wilderness.

In *Wizard of the Crow,* Ngugi portrays the wilderness as a place of spiritual values. First, he shows the wilderness as a place where we can acquire spiritual and supernatural powers to be used for the benefit of humanity, and he exemplifies this in the figure of Kamiti. It is the wilderness that enables Kamiti to have his supernatural powers, making him prominent among the people of Aburiria. It is from the wilderness that he acquires his knowledge of divination and sorcery after studying herbology in India and later communing with nature and studying the plants in the Eldares wilderness. Here, the wilderness has scientific value, for it functions as "a laboratory for the study of [plants]" (Aldo Leopold, 196). Armed with his knowledge of herbology acquired from India and the Eldares wilderness, Kamiti becomes a diviner, a sorcerer and a healer of sort, and does many things for the benefit of humanity

and for himself: he treats the sick; he is able to take on a bird's form and go on astral travel either to escape from the travails of the world, or as Youssoupho Mane puts it, to "feel an absolute freedom in a natural world deprived of all strains" (2) such as when we first meet him at the foot of the dumpsite in Eldares because of his joblessness, or to acquire powers to treat his patients.

An interesting illustrative example where Kamiti goes on astral travel in order to acquire powers to treat his patients is his arrival in New York to cure the Ruler's ailment. Finding that the Ruler's affliction "had defied his divining skills" (493), Kamiti resorts to his usual bird's form and goes on astral travel in his hotel room in order to find out the spiritual truth that lies behind the various cultures and traditions of the world to enable him to cure the Ruler. Thus, through astral travel, Kamiti goes "to all the crossroads, all the marketplaces and temple sites, all the dwelling places of black people the world over… from the pyramids of Egypt to the plains of Serengeti and Great Zimbabwe, Benin to Bahia and on through the Caribbean to the skyscrapers of New York; alighting where to glean [spiritual] wisdom" in order to "find out the sources of their [spiritual] power" (494, emphasis added) with which he can heal the Ruler. Interestingly, integrating his spiritual ideas from the East and the Eldares wilderness, and the ones he gleans from all the spiritual sites mentioned above, Kamiti is able to heal the Ruler partially to the amazement of the distinguished Harvard Professor Din Furyk who has tried in vain to cure the Ruler.

A second and far-reaching way we see spiritual values of wilderness is through the intellectually transforming lessons Kamiti teaches Nyawira and the reader and here, the wilderness functions as a place of spiritual education and awareness which Kamiti has acquired from the wilderness. As Peter Leman points out, these lessons mostly "concern developing more heightened spiritual awareness and a deeper connection with nature" (143) as well as respect for the natural world. Kamiti articulates these lessons through his discussions with Nyawira when she traces him to the wilderness. As she meets him, Kamiti begins their discussion by telling her about humanity's relationship with the natural world. Using himself as an example, Kamiti tells Nyawira that man is a friend to "all the natives of the forest" (204), including trees, animals, birds, plants, mountains and so on.

As Nyawira tries to steer Kamiti into political discussion, he would not hear of this and rather engages her with long discussions about Eastern thought and religion in relation to the spiritual benefits human beings can derive from staying in the wilderness (210-211). He ends by pleading with Nyawira to remain in the wilderness in order to develop her spiritual awareness rather than go back to the corruption-ridden Eldares: "Nyawira, please don't go back to Eldares, back to corruption. Let's build a shelter here, listen to what the trees and animals have to tell us… Let's stay here and find out the secrets of the heat of the sun and the light of millions of the stars" (211). Kamiti's plea to Nyawira is reminiscent of a similar piece of advice given by a saint to Zarathustra in Fredrich Wilhelm Nietzshe's book, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* when Zarathustra decides to leave the forest for the city: "do not go to man. Stay in the forests. Go rather even to animals" (qtd in Robert Pogue Harrison, 41). Telling Nyawira further about his predilection for life in the wilderness rather than in the city, Kamiti avers: "I still want to hear what the animals, plants and hills have to tell me. I need to find myself" (212). What all of Kamiti's discussions with Nyawira about the wilderness reveal is that it is a site of great spiritual awareness where, as he himself repeatedly puts it, human beings can find meaning to themselves, or as Leman would put it, it is a place with "a higher, more enlightened mode of existence that allows one to stand above and beyond the conditions of modern life" (144).

Also, when Nyawira is hunted by the State for her subversive activities against it and she flees to Kamiti in the wilderness, he continues with his teachings about living a heightened spiritual life in the wilderness as well as respect for the natural world. This time, he begins and centres his discourse on what he calls "the way" (266) shown by the Aburirian women, explaining its meaning from a Chinese seer's book, *The Lao-Tzu or Tao-te Chung:*

> *The way that can be told of is not the eternal way*
> *The name that can be named is not the eternal name*
> *The nameless is the origin of Heaven and Earth (266).*

Just after this, Kamiti again tells Nyawira:

> *I want you to learn what nature and solitude*
> *can teach us.*
> *Simplicity or balance, the Way. Call it the*

> *Forest School of Medicine and Herbology. I shall offer you such medicine that will make your eyes see what I see (266).*

What strikes the reader in these two passages is the author's use of "the way" reminiscing a similar use earlier by Ayi Kwei Armah in his novel, *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973). Eustace Palmer avers that Armah uses "the way" to refer to "a distant past when all the black people belonged to one vast African nation with its own genuine, pure system of values or way of life" (226). "The way is a way of life", Palmer continues, "as opposed to the destroyers' way of death. The way had its own clearly defined political and religious systems" (226). Commenting also on Armarh's use of "the way", Chidi Amuta remarks that it is "a primordial and quintessential African ethos", adding that it is "more of an ideal social formation [to] which Armah" wants us "to aspire after witnessing collective destruction by the twin forces of Arab and Western imperialism"(179). It seems that Ngugi's use of "the way" has the same meaning as Armah but he is more concerned with the old African values of spiritual life in the wilderness and respect for the natural world.

While in the wilderness alone, when Kamiti finds himself lonely, it is with spiritual entities that he seeks company by carving several African deities, looking "very much alive" (268). As he tells Nyawira, "When one is alone in the forest, one is forced to contemplate the universe and creation. My thoughts were mostly on African deities. I caught myself thinking: Why don't I carve a Pan-African pantheon of the sacred? They will keep me company" (208). In the African setting deities are gods and along with spirits and ancestors, are believed in African indigenous religion to have spiritual and supernatural powers, and also have strong influence on the life of the living. They are both kind and harmful because they "can bless people, when a proper harmony is maintained and at the same time punish when this harmony is disrupted" (Kingsley Ifeanyi Owete and Jones Ugochukwu Odili, 271-2). Undoubtedly, Kamiti's deities have spiritual undertones and blessings for the Movement for the Voice of the People because they not only "stand for a dream" (260), but they also enable the Movement to trace "the sources of black power" (757) and to establish unity "across

race and ethnic lines" (760). It is in recognition of the spiritual value of the deities that when Kamiti travels to New York to cure the Ruler's ailment, the members of the Movement remove the deities from Kamiti's abode in the wilderness and take them to their hideouts in the caves for purposes of preservation.

Finally, during their stay in the wilderness, Nyawira liaises and works with Kamiti to bring his spiritual knowledge of the Eastern world, especially Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path or Middle Path and integrate it with Kamiti's African spiritual knowledge acquired in the Eldares wilderness to develop a set of "seven suggestions for healthy living" which they call "the Seven Herbs of Grace" (275):

> *Take care of the body, for is the temple of the soul*
> *Watch ye what you eat and drink all the time*
> *Greed makes death greedy for life*
> *Cigarettes arrest life; alcohol holds the mind prison*
> *Life is a common stream from which plant, animal, and humans draw*
> *The good comes from balance*
> *Don't abandon yours for a mirage (275).*

These are spiritual lessons or principles Kamiti and Nyawira learn from the wilderness through their telepathic communion with nature there and which they offer to their patients and to humanity. They advise human beings to be mindful of their bodies, teach about the interconnectedness of all things and warn against physical vices. They call to mind the "Seven Deadly or Cardinal Sins" – Pride, Covetousness, Lust, Envy, Gluttony, Anger and Sloth warned against by the medieval and Christian theologists, as we see in works like Chaucer's "The Parson's Tale". In addition, they are drawn from "the Noble Eightfold Path" of Buddhism. In *The Pali Canon of the Ravada: Buddhism,* the author writes that Buddha once advised some monks against indulging in "senseless pleasures" and "self mortification", that if one refrains from these two addictions, one can discover what Buddha calls "the Middle Path" or "the Noble Eightfold Path", namely: right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right [mindedness] and right concentration" (qtd in Leman, 150) which correspond to Kamiti and Nyawira's ("balance" in their) "Seven Herbs of Grace". Interestingly, it is this tenet of "Seven Herbs of

Grace" which they develop to suit African conditions from Buddhism's "Noble Eightfold Path" in the wilderness that enables Kamiti and Nyawira to "treat social, physical and spiritual ailments in a holistic and organic manner" (Leman, 150) on their return from the wilderness to the city, Eldares. According to Dean, "[a]fter the wilderness experience is over… the protagonists will find themselves changed" (79). This is true of Kamiti and Nyawira, for after their wilderness experience, they acquired more power to treat the sick, discovered their identities, and are renewed, uplifted and regenerated to face the realities of life.

Conclusion

The goal of this paper has been to demonstrate how Ngugi exposes the values of wilderness in *Wizard of the Crow.* The paper suggests that in so doing, Ngugi utilizes the ideas of American wilderness canonical figures. In showing these values in the novel, the paper applied only some of the ideas of these wilderness thinkers, especially those figures whose ideas are manifestly illustrated in the novel. It has been shown in the paper that wilderness has many values: a place of beauty, of refuge, of spiritual retreat and awareness, of medicinal properties and plants, a site of social recreation, peace, freedom and harmony. The paper concludes that in a sense, Ngugi is a wilderness advocate and that part of the power of the novel is the author's ability to weave together the broad wilderness theme notwithstanding how digressive the narrative is.

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