

ORATURE, ORALITY AND MAGICAL REALISM IN JUAN RULFO'S *PEDRO PARAMO*: A REPLICAS OF THE NARRATIVE EXIGENCIES IN NGUGI'S *DEVIL ON THE CROSS*

Ifeoma Catherine Onwugbufo
School of General Studies,
Kwararafa University, Wukari-Nigeria
Email: flyckeringhope@gmail.com

Abstract

Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Paramo* published in 1955 establishes the traditional voice that is unmistakable, and specifically tied to the origins of the people of Latin-America who are so described. Like Rulfo's novel, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's 1982 novel, *Devil on the Cross* features the gicaandi player and traditional narrator to illustrate narrative exigencies in *Devil on the Cross* while revealing the decimated Gikuyu tradition. Rulfo and Ngugi leverage on the basic orality of their societies by projecting stories which reflect the postcolonial reality that recreates their traditions, placing their works as products of interrelated cultures. Using the textual analysis research approach, the work attempts to interrogate the synergy which the works of Ngugi and Rulfo depict as they tell their postcolonial stories by employing the oral traditions associated with their origin. This authenticates the similarity in the experiences of two settings – Latin-America and Africa represented by the settings of the two works under study; irrespective of the interregnum. The employment of the magical realism enhances the narrative technique and accords the thematic content a more sublime depth only achievable through the eyes of the supernatural. Referencing other works, this study hopes to establish the similarity of the postcolonial experiences which the two works under study reveal irrespective of almost three decades of hiatus in between the two generational novels depicting two similar events. The genius of the two writers lie in their ability to relay their postcolonial stories using indigenous narrative technique which are similar despite their varied settings.

Keywords: Orature, Orality, Latin-America, Post-Colonial Critical Theory, Magical Realism

Introduction

The outstanding artistry of Ngugi and Rulfo in their works under study could only have been achieved through the employment of orality sautee in magical realism. *Pedro Paramo* and *Devil on the Cross* demonstrate the richness associate with exigencies which only Latin-American and African narratives can afford. By detailing in details the sordid experiences of Waringa and *Pedro Paramo* – two characters who sink in individual depression as a result of societal solecism, Ngugi and Rulfo explore the profundity of orature, a combination of oral tradition and literature, which Ngugi had devised from his wealth of writing capability. At the backdrop of this is the derivative of Ngugi's 1982 work from this narrative, "The Devil, who would lead us into the blindness of the heart and into the deafness of the mind, should be crucified, and care should be taken that his acolytes do not lift him down from the Cross to pursue the task of building Hell for the people on Earth ..." (p.7).

It is no gainsaying that both Rulfo and Ngugi wrote their books under study, under the same circumstance – their continents were licking their wound from the horrible experiences of war and colonization. These people, who were dealing with the crisis of identity and the energy to move on beyond the horrid images which colonization and war leaves in their minds, must tell their own stories by falling back on the very narrative devises which are particularly, typical of the societies from which they emerged.

Oral traditional narrations have been revolutionized over time, and in the Latin-American and African literary orbits, many transformations accentuate this radical transformation. Significantly, modern narrative forms (writing) is a phenomenon that accompanied colonization tampered with traditional narrative forms of indigenous peoples of African and Latin-American nations with the inception of hieroglyphics which comes with many limitations. Most of the history of African and Latin-American nations were preserved using oral tradition with the advantages of its concept. It is within the purview of this study to interrogate the extent to which Ngugi's works are crafted like the works of Rulfo, Marques, Allende, Esquivel, and other remarkable Latin-American writers, using Ngugi's orature as a

benchmark. This study attempted to establish the globalization of narrative forms using the Post-Colonialist critical theory.

The significance of orality over written forms cannot be overemphasized. Despite the widespread acceptance of literacy and writing, Folley insists that "... oral tradition remains the dominant mode of communication in the 21st century, despite increasing rates of literacy." Through the accounts of Rulfo and Ngugi, first-hand information of the happenings in the African and Latin-American settings become accessible. The preservation of ancestral and national histories through poems/epics, songs, lyrics, praise-singing, ritual chants, love songs, dance dramas, speaking drums, bard performances, folklore, dirges, traditional songs, etc. informs the significance of the ghosts that litter Rulfo's work, and the gicaandi player and other myth which inundate Ngugi's work, "... Gicaandi Player, tell the story of the child I love so dearly. Cast light upon all that happened, so that each may pass judgment only when he knows the whole truth. Gicaandi Player, reveal all that is hidden." (Ngugi, 1982, p. 7). With these providing an informative background, these works are easily comprehensible.

Theoretical Explanation: Post-Colonialism, a Program of Complete Disorder

Works of literature emanating after colonization of specific locations come with a suite of disorders bordering on identity crises, intentional objective to retain socio-cultural personalities, mindful efforts to overcome anxieties and traumatic experiences, conscious practice of innovating a new language, Most importantly, postcolonial literatures tell a story – their story in alliance with Adichie's exploration of the subject of the 'dangers of one-sided story', "So postcolonial writers started pointing out that, actually, there's more than one side to a story ... in their own work, postcolonial writers tend to play around with *metanarrative*: they like to draw attention to the way that stories – or narratives – are constructed, and especially how they're always told from a certain point of view or angle." (Shmoop "Postcolonial Literature"). Pedro Paramo begins with the voice of Pedro Paramo's son, Juan Preciado:

I came to Comala because I had been told that my father, a man named Pedro Paramo lived there. It was my mother who told me. And I had promised her that after she died I would go see him. I squeezed her hands as a sign I would do it. She was near death, and I would have promised her anything. 'Don't fail to go see him,' she had insisted. 'Some call him one thing, some another. I'm sure he will want to know you.' At the time all I could do was tell her I would do what she asked, and from promising so often I kept repeating the promise even after I had pulled my hands free of her death grip. (Rulfo, p. 3).

Just like Chinua Achebe in his works incorporate transliteration, proverbs and other traditional expressions in his trilogy, Rulfo and Ngugi employ traditional myths, beliefs, and orality in their two works under study. Rulfo mentions the Media Luna, "That other one down there goes past the Media Luna. And there's still another that length of the place; that's the longest." (p. 113). Media Luna is significant for many reasons:

The ranch which Pedro Paramo own is called Media Luna (Half Moon); this suggests the shape of the scythe or machete used in farming. It also suggests the cusps of the moon, a shadowy area which does not really exist and which disappears when the moon grows full. It further connotes the idea of a place which is somehow, unreal. (Ekstrom, 3).

Literatures originating from colonized societies may not be successfully interrogated besides corresponding critical theories that are inclusive of Post-Colonialism. The significant locus of both apposite theories accentuates the relevance of this academic endeavor, which is positioned as remarkable to the compendium of knowledge already in existence.

The Post-colonial literary theory is a fall-out of colonization, decolonization, and neocolonization of the colonized societies, with reference to the African and Latin-American societies which are the focal points of this paper. Post-Colonial literature emanate from works of former British colonies in India, Africa and the Caribbean. The central foci are on identity, quest for independence or all-inclusive political system, emigration, and nostalgia and migration. Usually, the framework on which these foci are hinged is otherness.

Consequent to colonization, is decolonization which Fanon (1963) describes as "... the meeting of two forces, opposed to each other by their very nature, which in fact owe their originality to that sort of substantification which results from and is nourished by the situation in the colonies." (Fanon, 1963, p. 36). Regulus cites Said who opines that generalizations which are rendered in simple forms usually causes ineffective communication and misunderstanding on which is based, every analysis relating to postcolonialism. Postcolonialism can be said to focus on the consequences of imperialism which is rather synonymous with colonialism. Post-colonialism "... recognizes colonial understandings in literature and replaces the colonial metanarratives with counter-narratives of resistance by rewriting history and asserting cultural identities through strategies such as separatism, nativism, cultural syncretism, hybridity, mimicry, active participation and assimilation." Mambrol (2016, Postcolonialism, para. 1).

Not too far from Said's sentiments is Bhabha's impression revealed in his book, *The Location of Culture* in which he expounds the space between the colonized and the colonizer in terms of the value system, emotional disposition and politics. As Fanon (1963) also opines,

Decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is, obviously, a program of complete disorder. But it cannot come as a result of magical practices, nor of a natural shock, nor of a friendly understanding. Decolonization, as we know, is a historical process: that is to say that it cannot be understood, it cannot become intelligible ... movements which give it historical form and content. Decolonization is the meeting of two forces, opposed to each other by their very nature, which in fact owe their originality to that sort of substantification which results from and is nourished by the situation in the colonies ... (p. 36).

Definition of Concepts

Orality

Oral tradition, which is also referred to as orality is the communication and storage of information through the word of mouth. It "... refers to a dynamic and highly diverse oral-aural medium for evolving, storing, and transmitting knowledge, art, and ideas." (Folley). It is a way in which many nations and generations have preserved their histories and knowledge. New World Encyclopedia defines oral tradition (oral culture or oral lore) as "... the transmission of cultural material through vocal utterance ... As an academic discipline, it refers both to a set of objects of study and a method by which they are studied ..." The agents of orality include kings, folklorists, bards, praise singers, oral historians, religious leaders, etc. However, the accomplishment of self-identification brings home the traditional narrative methods portrayed in the literatures emanating from these cultures.

Aside body language, orality is the act of communication of thought by comprehensible lingo which is typical of humans, in contrast with animals with sounds as a major means of communication. What is thought out and communicated by means of a lingo can be further transmitted and actually recorded for posterity by the act of scripting. This is the reason "... orality continues to enjoy a growing interest as a concept underpinning research in many disciplines, including translation studies." (Bandia, 2015, Introduction: Orality and translation, para. 2).

Orature

Orature is a coinage invented by Ngugi wa Thiong'o first used in a paper which he presented at "The Wellek Library Lectures in Critical Theory" which held at the University of California in May 2010. (Treacy, 2012, Transnational Literature, para. 1). Ngugi expounded the concept of orature in his book of four essays revealing the global connection relating them. Ngugi names these globalectics in an attempt at a combination of the theories of globalization and Hegelian dialectics and takes this hybrid of globalization and dialectics. Ngugi conceptualizes his coinage, orature as "... an alternative to the oxymoron ['oral literature'] ... a counter to the assumed inferiority of the oral to the literary arts" (Ngugi, p. 72).

Ngugi attempts to analyse the combination of literature and oral tradition as losing relevance and content in the face of technological developments especially in the rendition of music, dance, jokes, traditional tales, and traditionally-based aphorisms. At this point, he posits that the internet "... is neither pure speech no pure writing ... it is orality mediated by writing ... cyborality." (Ngugi, p. 84). The discussion of the application of orature in the works of Rulfo and Ngugi is the thrust of this paper, poised to resurrect the postcolonial fever which Ngugi's postcolonial collection of essays prods. His collection ricochets the essentiality of colonial studies as contributive to African's intellectual capacity. By his intense grip of the nascent evolution of the indigenous languages in literature, Ngugi posits a globalized orality hich will be regarded as the vehicle for a new literary revolution. Greatly influenced by Caribbean writers like V. S. Naipaul, Claude McKay, George Lamming, C.L.R. James etc., Ngugi's post-colonial disposition is honed.

Against this background, Kenya's foremost writer and critic, Ngugi wa Thiong'o not too long ago, sealed this lacuna existing between oral tradition and literature, a blend which he christens 'orature' in his collection of essays, *Globalectics: Theory and the Politics of Knowing* in which he exposes a smidgen of impact of Caribbean and black African Literature, whose connection, according to Shaw prompts Ngugi to question the assumptions that portray European literature as more superior belonging to the western canon.

In his collection of essays, Ngugi "...combines the global and the dialectical to describe a mutually affecting dialogue, or multi-logue, in the phenomena of nature and nurture in a global space that's rapidly transcending that of the artificially bounded, as nation and region." (Ngugi, 2012, p. 8). In fact, the crux of Ngugi's book is to demonstrate that "... there has always been continuous literarization of the oral and oralization of the literary ..." (Ngugi, p. 84). Unfortunately, recent works from the settings under study fail to tell most of their stories using traditional oral forms.

Magical Realism

At its best, magical realism has been employed as a catalyst for portraying the sensitivities of the lower class struggles in the society. Magical realism therefore, affords the lower class of the society the escapist disposition which enables them to overcome their hardships, battered pride and emotions and takes their minds away from their plight. This is the reason magical realism is mostly embedded in themes of living dead and ghosts, magical appearances and disappearances, discolored visuals, and other ethereal elements. It is the mode of appearing and disappearing, and also, the presence of unearthly elements that gives it the name which is associated with magic. For this writer, magical realism takes the place between the reality of existence and utopia. Rave (2003) elaborates thus:

... power of the chocolate to impart visions to those who drink it. Many writers have been inspired by the legend. The narrative can be seen as a dynamic, circular structure where elements, characters, events, and names are seen to be constantly repeating themselves, so that it is difficult to distinguish the beginning from the end. Things are juxtaposed in such a way as to create a cycle, like the seasons of the year, the harvests, and the generations bearing the same names. In this narrative, the things that occur oscillate between the everyday and the impossible." (p. 42).

Esquivel's beautiful incorporation of magical realism in her work accounts for the success of the novel as a great book. Tita's birth and the tears-turned-salt imagery is a successful attempt by Esquivel to launch her readers into the unique magical world which her work is set to create. Meanwhile, such magical happenings are regarded as ordinary events, substantiating Allende's remarkable observation as affirmed in Galman's collection of quotes, that magic realism can be found in every culture, especially as anything is possible because no one knows everything. Magical realism like all other genres, will continuously evolve. The classification will broaden with new artists and writers investigating the sublimity of its form in their works of arts. This writer predicates on existing definitions of it to project that in no distant time, magical realism will be classified to denote more than an intrinsic idea.

Methodology

The methodology employed in this study is the textual analysis approach, focusing on the content. This work attempted to evaluate the effort of translating oral tradition into literature, appreciate the act of communication among humans through a relatable medium – Lingo; and prompting of narrative demands.

A Comparative Analytics of the Afro-Kenyan and Latin-American Orality

Decolonization never takes place unnoticed, for it influences individuals and modifies them fundamentally. It transforms spectators crushed with their inessentiality into privileged actors, with the grandiose glare of history's floodlights upon them. It brings a natural rhythm into existence, introduced by new men, and with it a new language and a new humanity. Decolonization is the veritable creation of new men ... (Fanon, p. 36).

It is interesting to observe that Ngugi through his 1982 work makes a prognosis of the future of magical realism which mostly gives credence to orature. Ngugi pushes an ideology that does not make either literature or oral tradition more superior than the other, which he expresses as "...assumed inferiority of the oral to the literary arts." (Ngugi, 2012, p. 72). Even in technological innovations in writing, an attempt to chase oral tradition and literature into obscurity, is ongoing yet they are so dependent on them. It is against the backdrop of this summation that Ngugi creates another hybrid of arts which he calls 'cyborality' (Ngugi, p. 84). – a combination of cyber and orality, to represent all forms of technological writing including Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, Telegram, Instagram, etc. This is further expounded in the fourth chapter of Ngugi's fourth chapter, 'Cyborature'

It is remarkable to recognize that oral traditions of the Latin America and Africans are quite similar; and disparities are almost insignificant. This may be attributed to the political background from which they evolve. With the struggle for identity and sovereignty, the Latin-American nations are evidently similar to the fate of the British colonies in Africa. Rulfo's work (Super Summary), "... is widely regarded as a classic piece of twentieth-century Latin American literature and famously inspired Gabriel García Márquez to write his own Latin American classic, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*." Rulfo's *Pedro Paramo* which begins like a story is told by two narrators basically. First, is the protagonist, and second, an unknown voice who is not a character in then narrative. *Pedro Paramo* seems to be Rulfo's questioning of the existence of purgatory, "The rain turned to wind. He heard '... the forgiveness of sins and the resurrection of the flesh. Amen.' That was deeper in the house, where women were telling the last of their beads." (p.30). In many instances, Rulfo makes references to hope for the dead.

This is compatible with the major theme of his work, in which the orality of the Latin-America embedded is the myth of the dead existing amidst the living. He places this in the annals of literature. Rulfo shows the dead among the living from the beginning to the end, even after the protagonist, Preciado dies, "...I began to sense that whispering drawing nearer, circling around me, a constant buzzing like a swarm of bees, until finally I could hear the almost soundless words 'Pray for us.' I could hear that's what they were saying to me. At that moment, my soul turned to ice. That's why you found me dead." (Rulfo, p. 133). He remains viable communing still with dead people as though they were all alive; in fact, the dead who are in the grave gave Juan Preciado insights into Pedro Paramo's cruel power. This is illustrated in these words (Battersby, p. 2014):

The town is full of the dead, yet they appear to be suspended in a state of living death. Their communal history remains vivid, and the translation conveys the offbeat tone of laconic resignation as well as the lightness of touch, the near whimsy amid the violence and brutality, as in a loaded image of a girl being forced, on her father's orders, to explore a hole in the ground.

More iconic is Rulfo's ability to incorporate the historical relevance of Mexico in his work, outside allusions to the back-to-back revolutions which rock the foundations of the Mexican nation. According to a web analogy, ("Pedro Paramo Summary"), "The chronology of the story follows events in Comala from approximately 1880 to the Mexican Revolution in 1910 to the Cristero Revolt of 1926." Rulfo

describes the village of Comala as sitting "... on the coals of the earth, at the very mouth of hell. They say that when people from there die and go to hell, they come back for a blanket." (Rulfo, p. 8).

While Rulfo successfully captures the revolutions of groups and individuals which characterized Latin-America around the time in which they wrote, Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross* conveys no one revolution in particular, but interminable lone revolutions targeted at the state and the black aristocrat class. Wariinga's point blank attack of the Rich Old Man of Ngorika and some of his cohorts and her mindset after the act – "... But she knew with all her heart that the hardest struggles of her life's journey lay ahead ..." (Ngugi, p. 254). are suggestive of the readiness of many lone insurrections to come. Ngugi did not fail to communicate the urgency of this rebellion which will sacrifice even the ultimate wish of every woman – love, on the table of justice and candor, as Wariinga "...walked on, without once looking back." (Ngugi, p. 254).

In addition, Rulfo makes reference to religious exploitation in which he describes the dubious activities of a Catholic Priest, Father Rentería, a priest who takes payments from the Páramo family in exchange for blessings and forgiveness, "Father Renteria picked up the coins, one by one, and walked to the altar. 'These are Yours,' he said. 'He can afford to buy salvation. Only you know whether this is the price.'" (Rulfo, p. 56). This is significant as the Catholic church during a certain period, was part of the causes of the revolutions before politics was eventually separated from the church. Likewise, is his constant mention of the Media Luna, which Pedro Paramo sought to control and acquire. In a nutshell, Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Paramo* talks about:

Rural Mexico and towns such as Comala are among the others of history that were left out of the official state history and discourse of modernity. It emphasizes the ghostly nature of Mexican's agrarian past in relation to the modern city. The campesinos and the ranchos represent the repressed in the collective Mexican memory or the forgotten past. Spirits represent ghosts of real people that have been forgotten or excluded from Mexico's history. The decadent remnants of a quasi-feudal social order, violent revolutions, and a dramatic exodus from the countryside to the city all gave rise to ghost towns across Mexico. The rise of the modern city coincides more closely with the end of the revolutionary era. When people left the city, or some other more prosperous town, Comala is forgotten. (Knick, Pedro Paramo by Juan Rulfo, para. 26., 27).

Referring to the biblical myth of Purgatory, he makes reference to a Christian prayer phrase, "Pray for us ..." (Rulfo, 133). Although Esquivel's work has no leaning on biblical mythology, Ngugi's incorporation of biblical myths in his works is a given. The title of Ngugi's 1982 novel is actually a biblical reference drawn from the crucifixion of the hero of the Christians, Jesus Christ, who was made sin by being hung on the tree. Evident right from the first section of the introductory chapter, the sermon on the mount by Jesus Christ is vividly captured, "Happy is the man who is able to discern the the pitfalls in his path; for he can avoid them. Happy is the traveler who is able to see the tree stumps in his way, for he can pull them up and walk around them so that they do not make him stumble ..." (Ngugi, 1982, chapter one, para. 4, 5). The allusion begins in the next chapter; and subsequently, through the entire work.

Employing the use of flashbacks typical of traditional storytelling, Rulfo tells the story of Pedro Paramo through two narrators. The first narrator is Juan Preciado who dies shortly after the narrative begins, and the other who is an 'omniscient narrator' that tells the story which precedes Preciado's quest to Comala. Rulfo introduces generous employment of Magical realism in his work, which Marquez affirms greatly inspired him on how to proceed with this works. Rulfo's success is vividly captured (Lewis, 2008), "And thus was Magic Realism born, although, in truth, Rulfo's own book is more diabolical than magical and more phenomenal than real; ..."

Observably, the Gikuyu oral tradition is based on retelling of folklores which are spoken by oral tellers – narrators. This is basically what Ngugi did with *Devil on the Cross*, where the narrator begins to tell Wariinga's story from the beginning. The length and breadth of Ngugi's 1978 Gikuyu novel is saturated with condensations of Gikuyu oral tradition which is based on the Gikuyu beliefs and worldview. The

Gikuyu tale structure begins most of Ngugi's works especially his late fictions. Njogu (2014), avers that "In the Kikuyu oral tradition, the prophet is one of the five key pillars¹ in shaping the destiny of the society. The narrator has to be persuaded almost forced by the supernatural force and voice to narrate the story of Waringa by the fireplace, the favourite traditional site of oral literature performance."

In theorizing the postcolonial experience among the Gikuyus, Ngugi leverages on the medium which his audience is compliant with – oral tradition, and immerses this in developing the literature that is to be strictly known as Gikuyu orature. The postcolonial experience is such that cannot be described in casual term; thus, Ngugi conforms with Njogu's avowal: "The reader is conceived as a listener and the formula prepares the reader for the long flight into fantasy. Immediately after the formula, the novelist however indicates that the story he is about to tell is 'a modern story' as is the case in *Devil on the Cross ...*" (p. 83). The narrator is usually the teller who has an audience, but Ngugi chooses to be the narrator in *Devil on the Cross*, which is innovative.

Franz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* and Edward Said's *Orientalism* published in 1961 and 1978 respectively, shaped the concept of the blend of colonialization, decolonization and neocolonization literarily referred to postcolonialism by researchers and literary aesthetes. "Focussing on the omnipresent power struggles between cultures and the intersection of cultures which results in multiculturalism and poly-valency of culture, Postcolonialism analyses the metaphysical, ethical and political concerns about cultural identity, gender, nationality, race, ethnicity, subjectivity, language and power." (Mambrol, 2016, Postcolonialism, para. 1). This is the focus of post-colonialism. It is against this backdrop that literatures from the 20th century retrace their narrative techniques to embody the orality of their societies; thereby reconciling the lacuna that exists between oral traditions and literatures possible only through orature.

Because orality denotes the use of speech rather than writing to communicate information especially to a non-literate audience, literatures from African and Latin-American backgrounds easily identified as 'primary oral cultures' employ orality by transliterating into written forms, otherwise termed orature. As a result, in citing Walter J. Ong (1982), Nordquist affirms that people from such cultures express themselves, using proverbs as "... convenient vehicles for conveying simple beliefs and cultural attitudes." (2019, Orality: Definition and Example, para. 3). Due to the unfamiliarity with the technologies of literacy, societies who practice oral cultures rely on orality for communication.

Esquivel using a recognized part of Latin-American orality as the title of her work is able to communicate the content of her narrative. Therefore, a native reader of Spanish decent seeing the title of her book knows what to expect. The family tradition of having the youngest daughter stay unmarried in order to take care of the mother in old age, is part of the Latin-American oral tradition; which Esquivel questions using the character of her heroine.

Globalizing Narrative Exigencies: The Afro-Latino Hybridity

To bathe is to strip off all clothes.

To swim is to plunge into the river.

It is good so ...

Come,

Come, my friend,

Come and let us reason together.

Come and let us reason together now.

Come and let us reason together about

Jacinta Wariinga before you pass judgment on our children ... (Ngugi, 1982, pp. 8-9).

Remarkably, the Gikuyu oral rendition is typically recognized by its polyphonic attribute. This refers to the oral presentation of a lore using more two or more voices. In Ngugi's rendition in his late works, the polyphonic rendition does not entail many performers as such, but the performance of one performer with the capacity to speak in different capacities, for diverse roles. In polyphony, the reference is necessary not to "...the number of voices as such but to the plurality of an individual utterance, that is

the ability of an utterance to encapsulate someone else's utterance, thus creating a dialogic relation between the voice of the self and the voice of that other." (Kimani, 2007, p. 47). The description preceding every chapter of Esquivel's novel is demonstrative of the traditional narrative of Latin-America. Her allusion to traditional Latin-American adages is best surmised:

you are what you eat" certainly applies here. The heroine of our story, Tita de la Garza, is an inspired cook, but her own emotions are somehow transferred into the dishes she prepares. When her tears are mixed with a wedding cake, the guests are overcome with grief and lamentations. When a thorn prick allows a few drops of her blood to fall into a rose petal sauce, her pent-up passion adds an aphrodisiacal quality to the meal—inspiring Tita's sister Gertrudis to run off with a soldier from Pancho Villa's revolutionary band. (Gioia, *Like Water for Chocolate*, para. 5).

Rulfo's *Pedro Paramo* consists of two narrators: Juan Preciado who is driven by two archetypes – quest and revenge ; and the omniscient narrator who reveals the story about Pedro Paramo's childhood, his unrequited love for Susana, the death of Pedro's father, Father Renteria's as the express imagery of what Battersby (2014) refers to as the "the corrupt passivity of the Catholic Church"; representation of Mexican characters similar to Oedipus, Odysseus, Electra etc. In fact, the omniscient narrator "...gives the history of Comala from Páramo's childhood to the moment of his death". ("*Pedro Paramo*" n.d.).

The exigency of Latin-American orality is best described by Esquivel's attempt to reinvent the idea of family traditions. Mama Eleena's character becomes the tool by which this important tradition is employed to throttle the love relationship between Tita, Esquivel's heroine with her sweetheart and suitor, Pedro. Rave (2003) reflects that the Latin-American story contains elements including legends, myths, oral story telling culture, folklore, etc. (p. 42).

In the Gikuyu tradition, one of the most popular narrative forms is the gicaandi which is a special poem performed by two poets only in the form of duet and epithets are generously applied. Kimani (2007) describes it as "... a competitive, yet cooperative, riddle-like dialogue poem and poetic exchange." (p. 47). The gicaandi musical instrument is the rattle. In fact, Gicaandi by Gikuyu musical conception is meant to be a competitive poetry in which poets contest by deciphering the messages relayed in the poetry. Kabira and Mutahi. (1988) aver that the Gicaandi is characterized by coded messages which represent the entirety of the life of the Gikuyus. Remarkably, "The defeated poet hands over his instrument as a sign of defeat. He would need to retrieve it in order to perform because without the instrument of his trade he cannot perform in public." (Kimani, 1997, p. 48) Against the backdrop of the characteristic covertness of the message of the gicaandi, Ngugi's late fictions are narrated in the fashion of poetic exigency. The poetic introduction of *Caitani Mutharabaini* translated to *Devil on the Cross*, by the gicaandi player in riddles set the pace of the plot thus (Ngugi, 1982):

Happy is the man who is able to discern the pitfalls in his path, for he can avoid them.
Happy is the traveler who is able to see the tree stumps in his way, for he can pull them up or walk around them so that they do not make him stumble.
The Devil, who would lead us into the blindness of the heart and into the deafness of the mind, should be crucified, and care should be taken that his acolytes do not lift him down from the Cross ... (p. 7).

What is unique about Ngugi's Gicaandi Players? The narrator seems to be the first poet and who is the contesting poet? Ngugi is the narrator, and consequently, the first poet, while he leaves the contesting position to be the readers of his work who should decipher the interpretation of the riddles in his poetic narratives else the readers lose their gicaandi instrument (rattle). In this context, what is the significance of the rattle when applied to the subject of Ngugi's narrative? The rattle is an instrument which produces sounds which are quick and short. It may also according to Free Dictionary.com mean, "... To utter or perform rapidly or effortlessly." (The Free Dictionary, "rattle"). In other words, Ngugi's readers who fail to decode the riddle in the narrator's poetic rendition will lose their acuity.

The urgency of the gicaandi player's role in the Gikuyu socio-cultural structure is better captured in the narrator's confession, "And then Wariinga's mother came to me when dawn was breaking, and in tears she beseeched me: Gicaandi Player, tell the story of the child I loved so dearly. Cast light upon all that

happened, so that each may pass judgment only when he knows the whole truth. Gicaandi Player, reveal all that is hidden.” (Ngugi, p. 7).

The readers will come to decipher the import of Ngugi’s reference to the Gicaandi Player as the ‘Prophet of Justice’ who will ‘reveal what now lies concealed in darkness’. (Ngugi, p. 8). This revelation is most astutely encapsulated in the Devil’s Feast at Ilmorog. It can be equally asserted that Ngugi positions the extreme opposing characters in his narrative as the two contesting poets – whereby, the Narrator, Wangari, Wariinga, the university students and their leader; and also, the workers and peasants are the good forces posing riddles which the evil forces represented by Mwaura, Mwireri, the experts in thefts and robbery at the Devil’s feast, the Ilmorog police, the Rich Old Man of Ngorika, etc.

Conclusion

For Ngugi, the place of orature in literature is undeniably life-giving, as he brings alive the African mythology so that the reader can almost touch it. His inclusion of songs and parables is a reflection of the culture of the Gikuyu establishing a link with the Latin-American literatures. Beginning with the title of her work, to the compartmentalization of her work according to the traditional meals, and other traditional references generously made in her work, it is no wonder that Ngugi is a good learner and imitator of creativity and magic. The narrative exigencies of which characterizes Ngugi’s 1982 novel is positioned by this study as a reproduction of its Latin-American contemporaries. Much as Ngugi’s creative invention is strictly based on his Gikuyu connection, the idea which upholds orature is typical of the orality of the Latin-American oral tradition evident in the ability of Rulfo and Esquivel to import the oral traditions prevalent in their settings into contemporary literature. Ngugi’s Narrator in his late fictions functions as the mirror which reveals what needs to be adjudged, and by the reflection, the reader remains the only judge. It is within the same logical sequence that Rulfo’s *Pedro Paramo* can be likened as “... the shards of a broken mirror. They reflect the characters, their relationships, and their identities. It is up to the reader to reconstruct the mirror in order to discover the truth reflected in it.” (“Pedro Paramo”, n.d.).

Works Cited

- Bandia, P. F. “Introduction: Orality and Translation.” *Translation Studies*, vol. 8, no. 2, April 23, 2015, pp. 125-127. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14781700.2015.102>
- Battersby, E. “The Dead among the Living: Pedro Paramo. The Irish Times, September 13, 2014. Retrieved from <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/the-dead-among-the-living-pedro-paramo-1.1926754>
- Ekstrom, Margaret V. “Introduction to Rulfo’s Naming Techniques in Pedro Paramo.” *Literary Onomastics Studies*, vol. 6, article 5. Retrieved from <https://digitalcommons.brockport.com/los/vol6/iss1/5>
- Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Grove Press, 1963.
- Folley, John Miles. “Oral Tradition Communication.” *Britannica*. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/oral-tradition>
- Galman, N. “Magic realism quotes.” *AZ Quotes*. Retrieved from <https://www.azquotes.com/quotes/topics/magic-realism.html>
- Gioia, Ted. “Like Water for Chocolate.” *Conceptual Fiction*. Retrieved from http://www.conceptualfiction.com/like_water_for_chocolate.html
- Kabira, W., and Karega, M. *Gikuyu Oral Literature*. Heinemann, 1988.
- Kimani, N. “On the Polyphonic Nature of the Gicaandi Genre, African Languages and Cultures.”, vol. 10, no. 1, 1997, pp. 47-62.
- Knick L. “*Pedro Paramo* By Juan Rulfo.” *Quia*. Retrieved from <https://www.quia.com/jg/1864994list.html>
- Lewis, J. “The Perfect Novel You’ve Never Heard Of. Rediscovering Juan Rulfo’s *Pedro Paramo*.” *Slate*, March 10, 2008. Retrieved from <https://slate.com/culture/2008/03/rediscovering-juan-rulfo-s-pedro-paramo.html>
- Mambrol, N. “New historicism.” *Literariness*. Retrieved as at May 16, 2018 from www.literariness.org/2016/10/16/new-historicism/amp/

- Mambrol, N. "Postcolonialism." Literariness. Retrieved as at April 6, 2016 from <https://literariness.wordpress.com/2016/04/06/postcolonialism/>
- New World Encyclopedia. "Oral Tradition (literature)." Retrieved from [https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Oral_tradition_\(literature\)](https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Oral_tradition_(literature))
- Ngugi, wa Thiong'o. *Globalectics: Theory and the Politics of Knowing*. Columbia UP, .
- Njogu, W. "Orality and the Written Word in the Age of Globalization: The Case of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Kikuyu Novels." *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature (IJSELL)*, vol. 2, no. 11, November 2014, pp. 82-90. Retrieved from <https://www.arcjournals.org/pdfs/ijsell/v2-i11/10.pdf>
- Nordquist, R. "Orality: Definition and Examples." Thought Co. August 15, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.thoughtco.com/orality-communication-term-1691455>
- Pedro paramo summary. (n.d.). Retrieved September 28, 2020 from enotes website, <https://www.enotes.com/topics/pedro-paramo>
- Rave, Maria E. B. "Magical Realism and Latin America." *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*, 2003. Retrieved October 1, 2020 from 481. <http://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/etd/481>
- Regulus, A. "Postcolonialism in literature: Definition, theory & examples. *Study.com*. Retrieved from <https://study.com/academy/lesson/post-colonialism-in-literature-definition-theory-examples.html>
- Rulfo, Juan. *Pedro Paramo*. @Created by PDF to ePub, 1987.
- Shaw, Zhane. "Gloablectics: Theory and the politics of knowing by Ngugi wa Thiong'o." Retrieved from <https://societyandspace.org/2013/03/07/gloablectics-theory-and-the-politics-of-knowing-by-ngugi-wa-thiongo-reviewed-by-devin-zane-shaw/>
- The free dictionary. Retrieved from <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/rattle>
- Treacy, C. "Transactional Literature." *Flinders*, vol. 4, no. 2, May 2012. Retrieved as at June 21, 2016 from <http://fhrc.flinders.edu.au/transactional/home.html>