

Introduction to Crime Fiction

Prof. Andrew Goldstone

(andrew.goldstone@rutgers.edu)

TA: Anthony Tello (anthony.tello@rutgers.edu)

March 26, 2023. Ngũgĩ (3).

reading check

And what rough beast, its hour come round at last

Daddy's friend

Rev. Jerrod Brown was a black man. Munira's heart missed a beat. He recognized the man: he had, once or twice, seen him at his father's house. (176)

"As for the child who is ill (and why indeed did you not bring him in?) I have already offered prayers for him. Go ye now in peace and trust in the Lord." (178)

He [Karega] recited the words. "They are hungry and thirsty, those who have not eaten the loaf of Jesus. Do you know the Reverend holy bastard could only offer us the food of the spirit, the bread and fish of Jesus?" (179)

old school ties

“Raymond Chui,” Karega read, and looked up at Munira....”It’s all right, it’s all right,” said Munira happily. “Don’t you know, he was a classmate...a great player...oh, my friend...you know. (179)

It was a truly culturally integrated party and Munira lost courage. (181)

the mystery deepens

But the man said: only the lady. (184)

“Tell me, what happened to the child? Where is he? Was he a boy or a girl?”
(185)

the mystery deepens

But the man said: only the lady. (184)

“Tell me, what happened to the child? Where is he? Was he a boy or a girl?”
(185)

“Kimeria! If you come near me, I shall scream, and your wife will hear,” she warned him, eyeing something like a knife on the desk. (185)

He must die, a voice thudded within, he must die. It was simple. It was bitterly sweet. It restored her calm and peace.

Behind, in the room, Karega, who suddenly diminished further into his corner, gorned once. He should die, he said as if answering a question somebody had asked. If I had a light I would burn up the whole place. (188)

focalization

But even amidst these thoughts he noticed her slight hesitation at his question, as if she did not know how to respond to it or how to approach the answer.

Which was true?

For somehow she could not, she realized suddenly as she was about to say something, bring herself to tell him of her involvement with Kimeria, the man who had ruined her life. (155)

- ▶ Who narrates? Who perceives? Why?

review

- ▶ when?
 - ▶ how far back do you have to go?
 - ▶ multiple ways of being in time
 - ▶ whose past is it?
- ▶ *Petals* as a classically postcolonial text
 - ▶ quasi-anthropological account of tradition
 - ▶ ...confronted by colonial modernity
 - ▶ English inflected by indigenous languages/storytelling traditions
 - ▶ plot of thwarted individual and communal development

the MESSAGE

I came to realise that Kenya was poor, not because of anything internal, but because the wealth produced by Kenyans ended in developing the western world....

This was what I was trying to show in *Petals of Blood*: that imperialism can never develop our country or develop us, Kenyans. In doing so, I was only trying to be faithful to what Kenyan workers and peasants have always realised as shown by their historical struggles since 1895.... Hopefully out of *Petals of Blood* we might gather petals of revolutionary love. (“Petals of Love,” 97–97–98)

the MESSAGE

I came to realise that Kenya was poor, not because of anything internal, but because the wealth produced by Kenyans ended in developing the western world....

This was what I was trying to show in *Petals of Blood*: that imperialism can never develop our country or develop us, Kenyans. In doing so, I was only trying to be faithful to what Kenyan workers and peasants have always realised as shown by their historical struggles since 1895.... Hopefully out of *Petals of Blood* we might gather petals of revolutionary love. (“Petals of Love,” 97–97–98)

My mother and all the peasant characters there represented were never going to be in a position to read the novels, and so what was the point of writing in English? I knew about whom I wrote: but for whom did I write?

“A Novel in Politics: The Launching of *Petals of Blood*,” in *Writers in Politics: A Re-engagement with Issues of Literature and Society* (Oxford: James Currey, 1997), 84, [JSTOR](#).

the MESSAGE

I came to realise that Kenya was poor, not because of anything internal, but because the wealth produced by Kenyans ended in developing the western world....

This was what I was trying to show in *Petals of Blood*: that imperialism can never develop our country or develop us, Kenyans. In doing so, I was only trying to be faithful to what Kenyan workers and peasants have always realised as shown by their historical struggles since 1895.... Hopefully out of *Petals of Blood* we might gather petals of revolutionary love. (“Petals of Love,” 97–97–98)

My mother and all the peasant characters there represented were never going to be in a position to read the novels, and so what was the point of writing in English? I knew about whom I wrote: but for whom did I write?

“A Novel in Politics: The Launching of *Petals of Blood*,” in *Writers in Politics: A Re-engagement with Issues of Literature and Society* (Oxford: James Currey, 1997), 84, [JSTOR](#).

what's in a name?

“Karega . . .” she said aloud. “What a funny name!”

“Ritwa ni mbukio,” Karega quoted the proverb. “Somebody a long time ago asked the question: What’s in a name? And he answered that a rose would still be a rose even by another name.”

Talking as if from a book, again thought Munira. Wanja countered:

“Oh, then it would not be a rose. It would be that other name, don’t you think? A rose is a rose.” (73)

Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose.

Gertrude Stein, "Sacred Emily," in *Geography and Plays* (Boston: Four Seas, 1922), 187, [HathiTrust](#).

Ritwa ni mbokio [sic]. The name is a useless thing.

"Gikuyu proverbs: 1000 in total," *African Manners*, July 7, 2012, [africanmanners.wordpress.com](#).
Someday I will find a better source.

more on language

Abdulla asked her if it was true that some Arabs could change themselves into women or cats she only laughed and asked him: but what kind of Mswahili are you to believe such things? (39)

“My real is not Abdulla. It is Murira. But I baptized myself Abdulla. Now everybody calls me Abdulla.”

“You mean, you thought Abdulla was a Christian name?” Wanja asked. (73)

what is now?

And all along Abdulla was thinking: and we fought to end red fezes and red bands on our bodies. (176)

The year that followed Wanja's departure from Ilmorog was momentous for the whole country. It was the year that started with a mysterious political murder in open daylight without the assassins ever being caught. He was a national, of Asian origins it is true, but one famous in the whole country for his earlier involvement in the struggle for independence and after, for his consistent opposition to any form of post-independence alliance with imperialism. He was an implacable foe of wealth gotten from the poor and whether in or outside Parliament, he would call for an agrarian revolution. (94)

To tea at Gatundu! (105)

embedding

- ▶ Wanja's "first narrative" (44–49)
 - ▶ EN1 CF1[Munira] CN2[Wanja]
- ▶ "Ole Masai whipped out the revolver" (165)
 - ▶ EN1 CF1[Abdalla] CF2[Ole Masai]
- ▶ Wanja's nightmare experience (156)
 - ▶ EN1 CF1[Karega] CN2[Wanja]

enter Sherlock Holmes?

enter Sherlock Holmes?

Crime for him was a kind of jigsaw puzzle, and he believed that there was a law to it – a law of crime – a law of criminal behaviour – and he believed that if you looked hard enough you could see this law operating in even the smallest gestures. He was interested in people; in their behaviour; in their words, gestures, fantasies, gait: but only as a part of this jigsaw puzzle. He had read a lot and was interested in the various professions – law, politics, medicine, teaching – but only as part of his one consuming interest. He was looking for that one image which contained the clue, the law of a particular crime. From there he could work out the exact circumstances, to the minutest details, and he hardly ever failed. (52)

Thus he had served the colonial regime with the same relentless unsparing energy that he did an independent African government, and he would serve as faithfully whatever would follow. He was neutral, and his awesome power over politicians, professionals, businessmen, petty criminals, all that, arose from this neutrality in the service of a law. (52)

next

- ▶ keep reading, through chap. 7 if possible (1–270)