

SPEAKING IN TONGUES: NGŪGĪ 'S GIFT TO WORKERS AND PEASANTS THROUGH *MŪROGI WA KAGOGO*



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Abstract; Summary In his article “On Writing in Gĩkũyũ”, Ngũgĩ says that “[a]n African writer should write in a language that will allow him to communicate effectively with peasants and workers in Africa – in other words, he should write in an African language” (1985: 151; my italics). This article is a deconstructive reading and assessment of Ngũgĩ’s performance in his latest and largest novel *Mũrogi wa Kagogo* (Wizard of the Crow) which is in three volumes in its Kikuyu version. The reading is premised on the Derridian idea that texts and their discourse propositions contain within themselves seeds of their own deconstruction or undoing. I argue that *Mũrogi wa Kagogo* contains within it seeds of destruction of the very ideological values that Ngũgĩ seeks to validate. In a newspaper article, Kamoche (2005) raised a fundamental question regarding this novel: “[C]an Ngũgĩ ape and hope to promote the vernacular?” His conclusion was that Ngũgĩ “inadvertently ends up perpetuating a hybrid language that is only part Gĩkũyũ”. “He is preaching Gĩkũyũ while practicing Pidgin English”, he “sneaks in a disproportionate volume of ‘Englisms’ through the backdoor”. Kamoche’s newspaper article, which was limited to the novel’s preface, dedication, acknowledgements and the synopsis, did not touch on Ngũgĩ’s stated objective: to communicate with peasants and workers. This article seeks to answer the question how far Ngũgĩ manages to reach his targeted audience of workers and peasants in his novel *Mũrogi wa Kagogo* (2004, 2006a).

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