

**SATIRE IN WAMUGUNDA GETERIA'S NOVEL NICE  
PEOPLE**

**By**

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**DECLARATION**

This project is my original work and has not been presented for an award of a degree in any other university.

Signature.....

Date.....

Gilbert Ochieng Oduor

This project has been submitted for examination with our approval as university supervisors.

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Date.....

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this project to parents and sisters and brother who have made life meaningful and stepped in to aid me financially to undergo surgery at a time when my financial means faltered in the course of my studies.

And to my roommate at the University, Mainga Nyambune, who never lived to see the fruits of his labor.

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## ABSTRACT

Many novels have been written about the effect of HIV and the resultant Aids Pandemic. In Kenya novelists Joseph Situma, Marjorie Oludhe MacGoye, Wahome Mutahi, Moraa Gitaa and Wamugunda Geteria have composed fictional works that reflect the devastation that the pandemic has wrought on humanity.

Satire is one of fictional literature's most important contributions to the society.

Satire has been used, among other social purposes, in the crusade against bad governance to chastise the governors of independent African states into reformation, to castigate alienation and neocolonial tendencies of African elite and to deplore the manner in which men exploit each other in the modern society in the name of religion.

Geteria expands the scope of satire in the most pragmatic discourse on the pandemic exposing how human folly perpetuates the spread of sexually transmitted infections. Indeed he demonstrates that the devastation that Aids wreaked upon humanity is due to the fact that social attitudes offered a conducive atmosphere for the virus to thrive. This project is a discussion of how the writer has employed irony, burlesque, exaggeration, paradox, invective and other literary devices to chastise the society out of the kind of hypocrisy that the writer deems responsible for the plight of men and women in relation to HIV and Aids.

The open discourse on Aids that the satirist advocates has been adopted as the most effective way not only in containing the spread of the virus but also in reducing the condemnation of the afflicted.

Stylistic theoretical framework, that studies a writer's choice of language in order to gauge the writer's message, has been used in an analysis of the text to study how Geteria has satirized hypocrisy that, as he so ably demonstrates, is responsible for the suffering of the affected.

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Background to the Study

Chris Wanjala has ever argued that when well used literature can provide solutions to problems in the society and that the perception that literature is flight from reality is borne out of either misunderstanding of literature or its misuse. Satire offers an avenue through which literature can address the most immediate social concerns. Through satire writers reprove evil or folly yet in a way that does not antagonize the individuals criticized. In assessing the role of a literary text in Kenya fiction this research regarded the advice proffered by Wanjala.

The critic confronted with a new book is forced to ask whether or not the book seeks to help man understand his own conditions and help him. (1980 :210)

The outbreak of epidemic is such a concern and HIV and Aids became the subject of fiction with the appearance of Joseph Situma's The Mysterious Killer, Marjorie Oludhe Mac Goye's Chira and Wamugunda Geteria's Nice people among other novels. While these are novels on HIV and Aids, Wamugunda Geteria has a unique message for his audience. Why he names a novel about an epidemic "Nice People" drives this study into an investigation of his intentions with regard to one of the main themes of the novel.

Wamugunda Geteria has published two novels. These are The Black Gold of Chepkube and Nice People. While the former was published in 1992, the latter was published in 1989. He is a forestry officer by profession. The novel Nice People was the subject of this study in order to investigate if the author had used tone, irony, characterization, parody, and other stylistic devices. Secondly this research was to investigate the possible

features of satire that manifest in the novel as a result from the use of the above elements. This research also aimed to establish the possible object(s) of the writer's satire.

The main object of this research therefore was to examine the writer's style and approach to his subject; to investigate the object of the writer's satire in relation to his historical environment and identify his place and contribution to the contemporary tradition of satire in Kenyan literature. The research furthermore intended to investigate the outstanding features of satire that make the novel Nice People unique.

This study examined the author's style specifically the use of stylistic devices for the purpose of creating satire, and the object(s) of the writer's satire. Leech and Short define style as "The way in which language is used in a given context by a given person for a given purpose." (9:2007)

### **1.1 Statement of the problem**

Satire is the use of humor to criticize folly or evil in the society. It uses sarcasm, irony and other stylistic devices to humorously reprove antisocial or evil traits that may manifest themselves in the society. A prior reading of the novel Nice People revealed that the writer attacks pretense, hypocrisy, exploitation and other antisocial practices in the society. However it was also evident that the novel has a humorous tone. This therefore opened up the novel for investigation whether it is a work of satire.

This study proposed to investigate the writer's use of stylistic devices to create satire and his contribution to the contemporary Kenyan satire tradition and to identify the object(s) of the author's satire.



## **1.2 Objectives**

The following were the objectives that this research set out to achieve:

- i. To identify instances of sarcasm, burlesque, irony and other stylistic devices in the text.
- ii. To investigate how these techniques contribute to satire in the novel.
- iii. To investigate the object of the author's satire.

## **1.3 Hypothesis**

The following were the working hypotheses to the study.

- i. The novel has instances of sarcasm, burlesque, irony, and other stylistic devices.
- ii. The novel is an attempt at satire.
- iii. The author is criticizing the hypocrisy, denial, stereotyping, and judgmental social attitudes that hamper medical research and practice and other evils in the society.

## **1.4 Justification of the study**

The Aids pandemic became the subject of literary discourse with the appearance of Wamugunda Geteria's novel Nice People in 1992. Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye, Wahome Mutahi and Joseph Situma among others have afterwards produced literary texts that adopt empathetic approach to the human condition. An examination of the novel Nice People, however, reveals that unlike these other novelists that adopt an empathic approach to human suffering Geteria adopts a critical view of social values that aggravate human suffering in the face of the pandemic. The writer regards the pandemic as an opportunity to re-examine social values in the contemporary society. Nice People is critical of human foibles therefore this study aimed to establish whether Geteria has used

stylistic devices in the novel and whether the net effect of these techniques was satire. Elizabeth Ogweno (2000) has studied satire in Okot pBitek's poems Song of Lawino, Song of Ocol and Song of Malaya. Ogweno's study of Okot's satire identifies religious leaders, and African intellectuals as the object of satire in the poems. Masumi Odari (1989) has studied satire in Wole Soyinka's The Interpreters. She identifies the pretentious African intellectuals in the newly independent states as the object of satire in the novel. Having done a research on Wahome Mutahi's two novels, Three Days on The Cross and The Jail Bugs Chris Wasike describes the novels as satire on the ruling elite in the society. This shows that satire as a literary genre has been used in critical examination of social problems. This research intends investigate how the author of Nice People depicts human foibles in the community and how the author has used literary devices to satirize it.

In an interview with the author of the novel Nice People that I carried out in December 13<sup>th</sup> 2012 at The Nairobi Public Service Club, Wamugunda Geteria described his novel as a work of satire. He said that the title of this novel is sarcastic. He claimed that the novel is actually a protest against the attitudes that medical practitioners and government officers had adopted towards the then newly emergent HIV infection. This research therefore aims to examine if indeed the author has used stylistic devices in his novel to achieve satire in the novel Nice People.

### **1.5 Literature Review**

This section it is dedicated solely to the review of existing critical texts on Nice People; all the literature related to various aspects of satire – as a literary genre and its history in Kenyan novel writing - is discussed in chapter 2.

In The Columbia Guide to East African Literature in English Since 1945, Simon Gikandi and Evan Mwangi describe the novel Nice People as popular fiction that deals with topical issues on a light and entertaining tone. They say the novel Nice People deals with HIV/ AIDS menace and the high price of the drugs needed to control it.

Geteria's works belong to the tradition of popular fiction in East Africa and often deal with topical issues such as corruption and diseases with a light and entertaining tone. (Gikandi and Mwangi: 2013:u)

John Roger Kurtz (1998) summarizes the novel as a crusade against social stigma by an altruistic venereologist. He says the text raises issues in medical ethics about the conduct of the medical practitioners in the advent of the AIDS epidemic. But he says the text was inspired by an article by Blaine Harden, formerly of the Washington Post, which quoted a World Health Organization official suggesting that part of the danger of the disease comes from the belief that "nice people" are actually not at risk. Satire is defined as protest against certain historical particulars. Kurtz, in this case, describes the novel as a crusade against social stigma. Below is a quotation from Urban Obsessions, Urban Fears: The Post Colonial Kenyan Novel

Dr Joseph Munguti sets up shop as a venereologist in a River Road clinic where he pursues a personal crusade to lessen the stigma of the venereal disease. (Kurtz 1998: 169)

The assessment of Mwangi and Gikandi (2013) and Kurtz (1998) of the novel have left the gap that this research attempts to fill; that is to describe how the writer uses stylistic devices to persuade the readers in his novel. This paper proposes to investigate the literary style with which this writer approaches themes in his novel with a further purpose to find out whether the novel could be a satire of social attitudes and exploitation by medical personnel. It is worth noting that contemporary medical practice has actually

adopted the openness suggested by the writer in his novel. Geteria through his protagonist advocates for expeditious provision of medicine, open discussion about sexuality and confidentiality not scorn, ridicule and condemnation.

Wairimu Ouma in an article on her blog site ([wairimuouma.wordpress.com](http://wairimuouma.wordpress.com)2012) appreciates the ability of the novelist Geteria and comments on the relevance of the novel to the contemporary society. However her comments pay no regard to the text as a literary work; she seems to conclude that the book is a treatise on social attitudes and how these perpetuate the spread of HIV. There is a gap left in her appraisal of the novel. There is no mention of style or literariness of the novel. She does not say how the author communicates his concerns. This research proposes to investigate how the author has communicated his concerns through style and whether he has the intention to reform these social attitudes.

In an article that appeared in the Nairobi Law Monthly magazine issue of September 2012, David Matende discusses the popular television standup comedy shows. In the article 'A Comedy for Ethnicity that Passes for Entertainment,' the columnist decries the low level to which creativity has sunk in the country. The columnist seems to argue that this is actually satire gone awry. Instead of social satire, which is committed to correction of the society, the parody on Television has ceased to focus on burning social issues and instead degenerated into a derision of negative ethnic stereotypes. He further seems to argue that this is how satire an instrument for social advancement can become base comedy to perpetuate ethnic bigotry. His conclusion - that currently there is a dearth of creative satire that focuses on urgent issues - is what motivates this research.

## 1.6 Theoretical Framework

Satire is achieved through the unique way in which an author uses language in his text. Therefore an investigation of satire in a text amounts to an investigation of the language of the text that is the investigation of style. The most appropriate framework for such a study should be able to study and interpret a work of fiction from the linguistic perspective. Kirsten Malmkjaer defines stylistics as the study of occurrence of certain items in written or spoken text. This is a quotation from The Linguistic Encyclopedia:

Stylistics is the study of style in spoken and written text. By style is meant a consistent occurrence in the text of certain items and structures or types of items and structures among those offered by language as a whole. (MalmKjaer 2001:510)

However Katie Wales's description of stylistics not only as an appreciation of formal features of a text but also the intended purpose is more apt for this study.

The goal of most stylistic studies is not simply to describe the formal features of texts for their own sake but, but in order to show their functional significance for the interpretation of a text in order to relate literary effects to linguistic causes where these are felt to be relevant. (Wales 1989: 438)

The adequacy of stylistics is inherent in its rationale as Geoffrey Leech and Mick Short define it in the title Style in Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose:

Stylistics, simply defined as the linguistic study of style is rarely undertaken for its own sake, simply as an exercise in describing what use is made of language. We normally study style because we want to explain something, and in general, literary stylistics has implicitly or explicitly the goal of explaining the relation between language and an artistic function. (2007: 11)

In other words, why a writer opts for certain expression depends on his intended purpose and this is what stylistics examines.

The suitability of stylistics to this study therefore lies in its ability not only to describe the author's choice of language but also the aesthetic effect produced by the linguistic medium. The suitability of the instrument is underscored by Henry Indangasi's assessment of stylistics theory in Stylistics.

By providing us with a precise terminology for describing the linguistic features that are peculiar to a literary text, stylistics enables us to overcome the temptation to make vague and imprecise statements about works of art that we are not able to substantiate about the language of the works. It gives us a precise and dependable methodology for analyzing the linguistic peculiarities of literary works. (1989: 19)

The principles for the study of stylistics come from the ancient practice of rhetoric. The practice of rhetoric refers to the approach that a speaker adopts with regard to his choice of language in order to achieve a particular effect.

Modern stylistics, which is a product of the evolution of rhetoric, therefore, analyzes the choice of language that a creative writer or a speaker adopts with the aim of determining how it influences the message in the text. For the purpose of this research I will be particular to the literary text as the principles of stylistics presuppose the unity between form and content in literary texts.

Indangasi further argues that style is the realization of aesthetic effect which is relayed through the medium of language.

Style therefore refers not simply to linguistic choices but to those which draw attention to themselves because of the aesthetic effect. In general, the stylist realizes the aesthetic effect by expanding the possibilities of language by using language in ways that are unconventional innovative, fresh and original. The stylist studiously avoids the beaten path. (1989: 19)

In Stylistics: A Resource Book for Students, Paul Simpson argues that the techniques of stylistic analysis should show both the structure and the function of language because these two are inextricably interwoven in creative texts.

In view of the above, this study is going to examine how satire can be achieved in a work of art through the use of corresponding stylistic devices.

### **1.7 Scope of the study**

This study focuses on the novel Nice People. In an interview with the author, he describes the text as work of satire. The reviews by Gikandi point out that unlike Black Gold of Chepkube which thematizes corruption, The novel Nice People talks about the effect of social attitudes on medical practice. There are many other novels on the theme of HIV but the novel Nice People is not just a novel on Aids as it examines social attitudes in relation to the spread of the virus. This research therefore limits itself to the novel which the author claims to be a work of satire and whose theme is Aids. While the author has two texts to his name Nice People explored an uncharted territory; it explores the impact of social attitudes on medical research.

### **1.8 Methodology**

For its methodology this study is going to involve a close reading of the text for a better understanding of the narrative, its themes, characters and the socio-historical context. Secondly an overview of the stylistic theory to identify stylistic devices that have been used in the text and analyze how the writer has used these stylistic devices to create satire in his text and to identify the objects of the writer's satire.

## **1.9 Structure of the Study**

I proposed to divide my study into the following chapters

- In the first chapter I provide introduction, statement of the problem, hypothesis, justification of the study, literature review, theoretical framework, scope of the study, methodology and study organization.
- The second chapter focuses on the nature of satire and provides a historical survey of satire in Kenyan novel
- The third chapter critically analyses the novel Nice People to assess its possible unique features as a work of satire and its contribution to satire tradition in Kenya.
- The concluding chapter summarizes the findings and suggests the perspectives for further research on the problem.



## CHAPTER TWO

### THE NATURE OF SATIRE

In the second part of this study, we attempt a description of satire as a literary genre, its role in the relationship between literature and the society. Since this study aims to establish the success of a novel as a work of satire, it has to establish the basis on which it could assess the success of a text as a work of satire.

Although scholars do not agree on a final definition of satire, there seems to be a consensus that satire is criticism, censure, rebuke or reproof by the use of humor. C. M. Fuess in Lord Byron As A Satirist In Verse argues that the definitive boundaries of satire in theory are blurred by the reality of the practice. However he asserts that “satiric spirit” is defined by the presence of humor and the intent to rebuke. This is how he describes the spirit of satire:

Variations in temper and aims may exist in different satirists; the subservient emotions may appear and mood other emotions operate, in individual cases, to modify the underlying mood; but fundamentally the satiric spirit is negative and pessimistic. It furthers disillusion by confounding romance with realism and fiction with fact. The satirist thus perceives and exposes incongruity, the discrepancy between profession and performance. He is actuated always by a destructive motive and it is his function to condemn and reprove. (1964:2)

By the term destructive he is referring to the trait and not the institution or individual and destructive motive differentiates the view of satire from that of other scholars but it should be noted that this definition attempts to accommodate the invective as a form of satire. Mathew Hodgart (1969) says satire has its origins in a state of mind which is critical and aggressive, usually one of irritation at the latest examples of human absurdity,

inefficiency or wickedness. (Hodgart1969:10) Hodgart and Fuess therefore assert that satire is in the critical spirit of a text.

Wole Soyinka regards satire as a vehicle for change in attitudes even to the extent that it could fuel a revolution. In Conversations with Wole Soyinka, Soyinka is essentially saying that satire influences people's perception making them acquire critical view of situations which is the first step in effecting change.

David Worcester argues that satire is criticism, whether subtle or overt. This is how he puts it in The Art of Satire:

The content of satire is criticism and criticism may be uttered as direct rebuke or as impersonal logic. Innumerable intermediate stages, by combining emotion and intellect in different proportions, lead from one pole of blind human feeling to the opposite pole of divine or inhuman attachment. The spectrum analysis of satire runs from the red of invective at one end to the violet of the most delicate irony on the other. (1970: 16)

In other words he argues that satire is criticism and does include invectives and verbal attack but that the satiric invective is not an abuse or word of insult. It shows detachment and complexity in the author's attitude.

While conceding that indeed satire can be so direct as to be confrontational he also demonstrates that satire can be made more artistic and consequently subtle by the use of style. This is how he puts it in Satire:

In the formation of any kind of satire there are two steps. The author first evolves a criticism of conduct- ordinarily human conduct but occasionally divine- then he contrives ways of making his readers comprehend or remember that criticism and adopt it as their own. Without style and literary form his message would be incomprehensible; without wit and compression it would not be memorable; without high mindedness it would not 'come home to men's business and bosoms. (13)

Indignation and its outlet are the two sides to satire. There is criticism and then there is style. Style refers to the manner in which the criticism is relayed. According to Worcester satire arose in modern English literature as a rigid poetic form. Early satire, he argues, was associated with wrath as he quotes Charles Churchill:

‘.....tremble and turn pale

When satire wields her mighty flail (6)

The place of humor in satire is however moot. While some scholars view humor as a component of comedy, others feel that it is indeed part and parcel of satire. Worcester says that English satire was initially associated with virulence and malevolence and the presence of artistic language would be a feature of humor and not satire.

“The intellectual, critical spirit that attacks pretense and acts as a watchdog of society is comic spirit” (7)

However when it comes to the role of satire Worcester is in agreement with other scholars.

“It has an aim, a preconceived purpose: to instill a given set of emotions or opinions into its reader. To succeed it must practice the art of persuasion and become proficient with the tools of that art.” (8)

The outstanding aspect in the views of the scholars above is the potential of satire to create dissatisfaction, a critical attitude towards certain particulars and it creates three points of convergence on the nature of satire. First satire is criticism, censure, reproof or admonition. Secondly satire involves persuasion. The writer of satire has to be

convincing and persuasive enough to sell his viewpoint to his audience. Therefore, satire is skilful as Hodgart argues in the following quotation.

First and most obviously, satire can turn from a state of mind into an art only when it combines the aggressive denunciation with some aesthetic features which can cause pure pleasure in the spectator. The spectator indeed may identify himself with the satirist and share his sense of superiority but that is not enough. There must be other sources of pleasure in the satire, as for example patterns of sound and meaning or the kind of relationship of ideas that we call wit, which we can feel as beautiful or exciting in themselves, irrespective of the subject of the satire. (1969:U)

Just like all other texts, satire naturally has a writer and its intended audience. However there is an institution or a vice that is not necessarily part of the audience which is the subject of the text. In On the discourse of Satire: Towards a Stylistic Model of Satirical Humour , Paul Simpson argues that satirical discourse has three essential elements.

These are the *satirist* (producer of the text), the *satiree* (an addressee whether reader, viewer or listener) and the *satirized* (the target attacked or critiqued in the satirical discourse). (08)

The satirist, the producer of the text, is the author of the criticism which in this case would be the writer of the text. The satiree here is a term used to denote the audience- for whom the satire is meant. The satirized is the object of the criticism. Although the position of the satirized is what actually motivates the production of satire, the satirized is, however, not a participant in satire. In this context discourse should be understood as the meaning that a text communicates in a given context. Therefore, for satire to succeed the satirist must first of all convince the audience to perceive a situation in the very same way he (the satirist) sees it. How does the satirist convince the audience to share his opinion?

This brings us to the next stage that involves a discussion on how the satirical effect is achieved in a text. In any satirical text the satirist should be able to communicate the incongruity between expectations and reality. Hodgart says that wit turns satire into an art by correlating ideas. Worcester calls the instruments of persuasion the fact that a satirist uses rhetorical devices:

Rhetorical devices, then serve to win the reader and to soften the impact of the writer's destructive or vengeful sentiments. Such devices are important for the study of satire. The skill with which they are employed serves as a criterion between good satire and bad. (14)

The manner in which a writer employs the use of style has the effect of creating variation in the quality of satire. The satirist can be so tactful as to employ stylistic devices that make the attack subtle yet easy for the audience to decipher. This is how Worcester describes the spectrum on which satire runs.

Innumerable intermediate stages, by combining emotion and intellect in different proportions, lead from one end of blind human feeling to the opposite pole of divine or inhuman detachment. (16)

Worcester here argues that satire can be sheer rage, or just irony and he qualifies this:

The spectrum analysis of satire runs from the red end of invective at one end, to the violet of the most delicate irony at the other. (16)

Therefore the level of indignation affects the satirist to the extent it produces variation in what constitutes satire.

Both Pollard and Worcester concur that satirists are very much like preachers in their task; they seek to convert their audiences. But unlike the preacher the satirist has no

religious dogma to back up his logic. He has to appeal to common sense and reason. The question therefore is how a satirist can appeal to the commonsense in his audience.

## **2.1 Stylistic devices involved in Satire**

In order to effectively investigate satire in a text we have to be conversant with the way it is produced in a text. Simpson describes satire as a type of macro structure of discourse into which a variety of narrower techniques of verbal and visual humor may be factored. In Oral Literature of The Luo, Okumba Miruka states that satire is produced through the use of imagery, irony and parody. Worcester says that satire is produced through burlesque, irony and sarcasm. To this list Arthur Pollard adds characterization and tone. This section shall briefly describe the stylistic devices that are employed in the creation of satire in a literary text.

Satire is driven by anger or dissatisfaction at some state of affairs. The manner in which this sort of anger is expressed may result in denunciation or rage. When there is much rage in the speaker, the result is abuse or insult. However when someone expresses anger in an artistic way that hides his rage but nevertheless relays his message the result is an invective.

Neither definition of the invective nor its validity as a satirical device is widely accepted. However scholars are in agreement that when there is so much wrath in the writer, he may be so direct as to engage in direct verbal attack the result of which is really an abuse and not an invective which is a form of satire. Worcester says there is a distinction between a gross invective and a satiric invective:

This gross invective or abuse is distinguished from satiric invective by direct intense sincerity of expression. Satiric invective shows detachment indirection and complexity in the author's attitude. (19)

The difference between an insult, through a curse or an epithet and the satirical invective lies in the fact that while the satirical invective takes much artistic use of language to succeed the gross invective comes most naturally as spontaneous overflow of emotion.

Worcester puts it this way:

“Moreover it takes longer to manufacture and longer to digest, allowing anger to cool and wit to come into play.” (26)

The injection of humor converts rage into art which constitutes the satirical invective.

Worcester says that that laughter is an essential component of a satirical invective.

Nevertheless, it must be maintained in his teeth that the devices that converts gross invective and abuse into satire - into even the lowly invective satire – are the devices of comedy.

Aristotle regarded the comic as ‘an ugliness without pain’ (32)

Worcester argues that laughter is the beginning of satire and this heralds the most integral aspect of satire. The submission that the artistic injection of humor into an invective creates a compelling reason to describe what humor is in satire.

Satire is described as humorous criticism. This means humor is an integral part of satire.

Raskin's theory of textual humor is an attempt to explain how verbal text realizes humor.

Simpson describes the semantic script theory of humor ( SSTH) in the following terms.

In its most general sense the central hypothesis of the SSTH is elegant in its simplicity. For a text to be a joke, it needs to satisfy two basic conditions. The first is that the text has to be compatible, fully or partly with two different scripts. The second is that the two

scripts with which the text is compatible are opposite in a special sense. And it is that special relation of script oppositeness which provides the main ingredient in the generation of a single joke carrying a text. (10)

Raskin's theory is applicable majorly in demonstration of the disparity between profession and practice that characterizes satire on hypocrisy in that the same text carries the real image which is juxtaposed with the ideal. This heightens the irony that leads to humor and when the audience is moved to laughter then it means they appreciate the logic and half the satirist's work is done. He further argues:

The tools of the comic furnish him with the best appeal to reason that exists. Intuitive and instantaneous, the comic perception is a flash that exposes whatever is antisocial or egotistic or inelastic in human nature. (36)

However at this point it should be appreciated that satire differs greatly from comedy.

While comedy is casual in its focus, satire is intense.

If the comic devices are applied to a single object or group of related objects, if a sense of unity is produced by the common bearing of diverse illustrations, we are on the side of satire. If the operations of wit are promiscuous and casual the presumption is in favor of comedy.

Harsh derision denotes satire; at the other end gentle banter and mild amusement denote comedy. The final conclusion is reached by a comparison of two readings; one closeness of pursuit, the other the intensity of condemnation. (37)

The ultimate decider however lies in the reality that while the laughter of comedy is an end unto itself the laughter of satire has a preconceived aim. In English Satire: The Clark Lectures, James Sutherland argues that though they may share some characteristics, satire is not comedy. He argues that the distinction between satire and comedy lies in the



intention. While comedy is about sheer amusement, satire is means to perpetuate morality. This is a quotation from the text.

Where the writer of comedy is content to interest and amuse and to fashion delightful patterns out of human characters and actions, the writer of satire is trying to persuade men to admire or despise or to examine their habitual assumptions, to face ugly facts, to look beneath the surface of things, to change sides in politics or religion, to return to the old and true, to abandon the old and outworn, to this or to do the exact opposite- in short to see, or think or believe whatever seems good to the writer of the satire. (1956:5)

He further argues that satire is protest that results from indignation and the satirist has to persuade his readers to agree with his judgment of morals. The writer of satire therefore has to employ the use of persuasion. He says:

The motives that lead to satire are varied but there is one motive that may also be called a constant; the satirist is nearly always a man who is abnormally sensitive to the gap between what might be and what is. Just as some people feel a sort of compulsion when they see a picture hanging crooked, to walk up to it and straighten it, so the satirist feels driven to draw attention to any departure from what he believes to be the truth, honesty or justice. He wishes to restore the balance to correct the error; and often it must be admitted, to correct or punish the wrongdoer. (4)

According to Sutherland satire rose from denunciation and satire in mediaeval Europe took the form of invectives. He however argues that Lampoons and invectives constitute destructive and not constructive criticism that is expected of satire.

One more way of creation of laughter in a text involves the perception of incongruity. This can be studied under different forms of irony. Satire is constructed on the potential of irony to convey intended message in a text.

From its uses of wit, charactonyms and other verbal devices to its comprehensive animal worlds, and preoccupation with “truth” and “reality” satire exploits the ability of irony to

expose, undercut, ridicule and otherwise attack indirectly, playfully, wittily, profoundly, artfully. (Simpson 1958:17)

This means that irony, described as the heart of literature, is an integral part of satire.

Worcester argues that all forms of irony contribute to satire.

Irony is a form of criticism, and all irony is satirical, though not all satire is ironical. (81)

Arthur Pollard explains that sometimes satirists exploit irony to achieve satirical effect. The following is a quotation from his book on Satire:

Satire is always acutely conscious of the difference between what things are and what they ought to be. (The satirist) is therefore able to exploit more fully the differences between appearances and reality to criticize hypocrisy. (1970: 3)

While Pollard specifically refers to the technique and the desired effect of irony, Worcester has a slightly different view of irony.

Beneath the surface currents of the story deeper and contrary tides are flowing. Our work as readers is doubled yet oddly enough our sense of spectatorship is greatly stimulated. We feel a new awareness of cosmic forces as we see in the humblest objects of the operations of chance destiny and necessity. (1970: 74)

He further argues that cosmic irony is an ingredient of the satire of frustration. Satire of frustration treats the vanity and pointlessness of man's aspirations.

There are several types of irony.

Verbal irony lies mainly in the choice of words and the intention with which the writer (or the speaker) uses them. The textual inversion of meaning constitutes verbal irony; that is, the disparity between what is said and what is actually meant. The main aspect of verbal irony lies in the intention with which a speaker uses words that are opposite of

what he actually means. Worcester argues that sarcasm and verbal irony are one and the same thing.

Sarcasm is then a form of verbal irony produced by an inversion of meaning. Unlike the other forms, more literary ironies it never deceives its victim it carries its sting exposed so that it is not misunderstood. It is accompanied by non verbal conventions, curling of the lip, a special intonation and falling inflection and often shaking or nodding of the head. (1970: 72)

**Sarcasm** therefore like all the other devices that are regarded as components of satire has the intention of hurting the subject and to ensure its success, body language is usually employed to complement the words. The speaker uses words to slight and deflate. However the need for the audience to perceive events more objectively necessitates revealing to the readers some things that the characters in the narrative may not actually be aware of. When the audience holds some very important piece of information at the expense of a character in a narrative, that creates a stylistic technique called dramatic irony.

Dramatic irony is the appreciation of the plot that the audience or keen readers have but the characters do not. This is what drives the plot in a narrative making an otherwise meaningless sequence of events quite interesting. This technique is realized when a character in a narrative (in a novel, or on stage in drama) does not know what the audience knows and acts in ignorance of the same causing laughter or disgust in the audience. This is Katie Wales description of dramatic irony:

“It is quite common for the reader to perceive the irony of situations before characters do: this is known as dramatic irony.” (Wales 1989: 264)

In Nikolai Gogol's satire The Government Inspector for instance, having been informed by Yosif that Hlestacov is no government inspector the audience is able to perceive that the town inspectors are wasting their efforts in trying to ply him with presents and hospitality. Dramatic irony is an indispensable aspect of the tragedy. The author exposes the audience to the failings of the hero which neither the hero nor other characters are privy to. Worcester describes the role of dramatic irony in Aristotlean tragedy.

Besides a superiority in factual information dramatic irony presupposes a kind of secret knowledge in the audience. Lightning never strikes the hero out of the cloudless sky, else there would be no sense of tragedy. The storm may roll up swiftly and inconspicuously but a man with proper respect for heavens will read the signs. (113)

Through such a technique the novelist or dramatist holds the attention of the audience as they cease being passive audience in the narrative process and become active, anticipating and judging actions of the characters. A novel accords the readers the kind of description that enables the reader to understand the motives beliefs and actions of the character. The reader of a novel is therefore able to anticipate the failure of the characters and explain the reasons afterwards because like God they see everything even the most secret thoughts of the characters. The other form of irony that is an essential part of humor is comic irony.

The concept of comic irony refers to the critical perception of imperfection in humans that make their ideals unachievable. According to Worcester comic irony is one of the devices that the satirist employs to achieve satire. This is how he describes comic irony:

Comic irony makes us see the ridiculous contrast in every human being and understand the saying that everyone has defects of his virtues. Behind every saint lurks a hypocrite.

Study the Great Man's shadow and see a thug. No human being however sublime is altogether free from the ridiculous and the pitiful. (140)

A writer may use this stylistic device to relay the fact of imperfection of human beings.

The term situational irony is used to refer to scenarios in which actions have effect that is opposite of what is actually intended. A writer conjures a situation in which the actions of a character do not have the desired effect. Bloom and Hobby (2010) argue that while humor emphasizes the real, the emphasis of irony is on the ideal. Satire however attempts to bring both humor and irony together.

Irony is a constant catalyst of black humor in that it regularly functions as a bridge between the comical and the tragic. Irony like humor is variously a literary mode, and an existential mode, a way of looking at life. Like humor it focuses on the discrepancy between the real and the ideal and like humor it has traditionally been one of the chief devices of for this reason. Yet another aspect of satire is exaggeration. Exaggeration takes the form of parody or burlesque.

Scholars tend to use the two terms interchangeably therefore it is safe to assume that though burlesque is used about a kind of writing it can also refer texts.

Burlesque entails the author constructing a distorted image of an object for the audience to contemplate. This caricature must nevertheless retain sufficient essential resemblance to the model for the audience to recognize it. When the audience finally recognizes the original the distortion becomes a source of amusement. People are often amused by caricatures or misshapen versions of themselves or others. Compared to the real individual the caricature is a source of amusement. Burlesque is a verbal version of

caricature drawing that satirists exploit in ridiculing their subjects. It is one of the main techniques of satire. Through **burlesque** the satirist is able to expose the difference between the real and the ideal. However when it comes to texts Worcester argues that the parody should not necessarily be juxtaposed to the original. The audience must necessarily possess the wherewithal to provide original for burlesque to succeed as a form of satire.

We do not find a parody printed side by side with its original. It is the readers' part to supply the model. He must hold up the model and the author will furnish him with a distorted reflection of it. (42)

This therefore implies that burlesque text do not provide the subject. It relies on the audience to contemplate the subject upon which it is constructed. And the success of this stylistic device in bringing out satire depends on the audiences' appreciation of the source of the distortions.

An example of the use of this stylistic device is in Ngugi wa Thiongo's Wizard of The Crow where state operatives Machokali and Sikiokuu surgically enhance their eyes and ears respectively so that they can spy on citizens. In this text Ngugi uses burlesque to satirize the sycophants that are too eager to please the oppressive government. They are therefore used by the government to spy into the private lives of the citizens.

Language is the medium of satire and a writer basically has two choices in the creation of satirical texts. He may rely on innate properties of language such as plurality of meaning that lexical items manifest so as to produce ambiguity, punning and double entendre. However he may opt to manipulate language to relay his intended meaning.

The duality of meaning of choice lexical items, phrases or statements can be exploited by a writer to create a satirical effect in a text. The writer can create this either by punning i.e. using a word in a way that it is capable of two meanings in a context or double entendre that is using an expression but intending a different meaning on a subsequent occasion. In Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet after Mercutio has been stabbed by Tybalt, he believes that he is dying. He therefore tells Romeo that the following day he will be a grave man. This brings out two meanings. First, he will be buried and secondly he will never be the same frolicsome man that he has always been. The second use of punning is in Oscar Wilde's The Importance of Being Earnest. This is a satire that plays upon two occasions. There is a cunning character named Earnest. And there is an impostor who tries to impersonate him. When the impostor is embarrassed the second meaning of the word comes into play. In the second instance earnest is no longer a name it is a virtue.

Satire can also be created in a text by creating a situation that seems to be full of contradictions. Masumi Odari comments that Achebe's A Man of The People is a good example of contradictory situations. The Minister of Culture seems to know nothing of culture. Chief Nanga, a man of the people is not.

Another way in which writers achieve satire is through characterization. Pollard underscores the importance of characters in a creative text.

Satire is about people and there must therefore be some form of characterization. The simplest form is that of description by the author. (1970: 47)

In his M.A. thesis Chris Wasike concedes that sometimes a literary artist may have to rely on what he refers to as flat, one-dimensional characters to achieve satire. This

technique seems to characterize plays and it characterizes two plays Francis Imbuga's Betrayal in The City and Oscar Wilde's The Importance of Being Earnest.

In conjunction with the first technique we can come up with further integrative function of characterization and irony. This study therefore is an attempt to investigate the possible correlation of irony to characterization to achieve satire. Pollard says a novel has an advantage over plays in construction of the character traits.

Allowing that drama (and here I include the novel) is , in Aristotelian terms, characters in action, we have at least four ways by which satiric meaning may emerge namely, by what he does (or fails to do) by what others do or say to him, by what he says of himself and (in the novel) by what the author says about him. (1970: 47)

This study is going to investigate whether the author has used characterization to construct satire in the novel. The foregoing is neither exhaustive nor the only ways in which satire can be achieved in a text. However they should serve in the study of satire in the novel Nice People.

## **2.2 The Role of Satire**

Both Ball and Simpson agree that satire responds to particular historical situations and by definition satire is supposed to reform. In English Satire James Sutherland describes satire as potential means of reformation and improvement.

Contemporary satire is literature's greatest contribution to the progress of society. In the recent times satire has been used in the crusade against bad governance in Africa in general and Kenya in particular. The themes of corruption and mismanagement of public affairs dominates satirical texts. Wole Soyinka affirms the role of satire in fuelling discontent but not necessarily moving masses.



But I think those who use satire in the theatre generally recognize the fact that it is not the entire demand which is made of them; it is not the entire story, but first of all you have to arouse in the people a certain well to put it crudely, a certain nausea toward a particular situation, to arouse them at all to accept the possibility of a positive alternative when it is offered to them. (28)

Satire engages in intellectual stimulation rather than outright incitement against what the writer deems unacceptable. This is because it has to enable the society overcome its fear of oppressive and repressive institutions.

You must be able to first of all indicate to them that the monster that they thought could never be laughed at is you know very laughable and that's not very negative after all. But satire is not aiming for utopia nor does it see a utopia that makes it intolerant of the present. (28)

Satire has also been used as a tool for social criticism. Satire has been used to attack pretense, alienation and hypocrisy.

### **2.2.1 The Role of Satire in African Fiction**

Scholars have echoed Plato's assertion that literature should be committed to advancing the good of the society although not necessarily by singing praises of leaders. Juvenal, the classic roman satirist said that satire is the highest purpose that literature serves. In a study of Juvenal, Gilbert Highet says the following:

But Juvenal himself holds that the only kind of literature which has any genuine reason for being written *—now*, in his own day- is satire. Satire deals with real life, and real and contemporary life is so horrible and so absorbing that other subjects are worthless. (1954: 48)

Commenting on the state of fiction in Africa, Abiola Irele says that criticism offers endless possibilities for the discrimination of values. He further argues that criticism enables us to determine the wheat from the chaff (Irele 1972: 29). As Irele further argues;

There are more writers with a serious purpose today than there is an educated public for it. The quality is of indifferent kind but then it is difficult to take a really critical attitude to this writing if we are not to suffocate or kill new talent. However, for healthy growth of new body of writing the need for standards to be met is necessary. (1970; 30)

What Irele said in the 1970s may still hold and this study derives its justification from the recommendations of Abiola Irele. As he argues later in “Perspectives in African Literature”, fiction should be the vehicle for social aesthetics. Literature should praise what is beautiful while correcting what is wrong. This fits the field of satire.

African novel’ ([www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)) argues that the popularity of the African novel has a lot to do with its ability to integrate the rhetorical didactic function of the African folk tale. The African folk tale conveys the mores of the society. He further argues that the African novel is an example of appropriation of European Languages to convey the same didactic functions that the oral narrative has always played in the pre-colonial African set up.

The concept of orality (or “orature”) which serves as the theoretical and ethnographic foundations the discussion of the intrinsic properties (character types, narrative functions and rhetorical devices as well as the role of metaphor and symbolism) by which traditional narratives are structured can also be applied to the African novel insofar as these properties have had a marked effect on the way African novelists have often conceived and executed their works, to the extent that we are sometimes obliged to identify in their works the signs of textualized orality. (1)

This research intends to investigate the rhetorical devices in a narrative that may result in satire as a narrative function.

Abiola Irele argues that satire is not an imported mode to African literature but has always been a component of the African folk tale. The emergence of the novel, he argues

only affords the African writers an opportunity for appropriation of European languages for expression of African aesthetics. The lampoon, for instance, serves the same function as satire. Irele argues that the development of the African novel presents the totality of African literature in general and satire in particular to scrutiny by European scholars who insist on judging it by European standards.

If humor is the mainstay of satire, then the lampoon does qualify to be satire. However, the place of humor is ever becoming blurred in the study of satire.

In an article The Transformative Vision of a Modern Society in Wole Soyinka's 'The Trials of Brother Jero' Kamma Poal has studied satire in Soyinka's text and he makes the following evaluation.

Satire as a form of discourse has always been used to make fun of foolish behavior of men and how they run their social institutions. Since satire is not only used to criticize but also to reform, Wole Soyinka's 'interest in using satire is to explore in depth the sociopolitical situation of contemporary Africa and to analyze the nature of the contemporary man whose psyche runs agog. (1)

Worcester reiterates the role of satire in teaching people to take responsibility for their actions and not blaming their stars or fortunes. Poal argues that in the play Soyinka is satirizing the gullibility of the contemporary man who thinks that his problems can be solved by prayer and religion. The play is a satire on the tendency of religious leaders to turn their religion into profiteering ventures. Poal appreciates the effectiveness of Soyinka's approach to satire.

The most significant aspect of Soyinka's work, many critics have noted, lies in his approach to literature as a serious agent for social change and his radical commitment to promoting human rights in Nigeria. Critics have it that the humor and compassion evident

in his plays mark this end as well as his unquestioning portrayal of the consequences of political greed and oppression add a universal significance too his own portrayal of his own Nigerian life. Through the use of irony sarcasm and of satire, he attacks the sociopolitical vice seen in his contemporary Nigerian society. Most critics see Soyinka's satire as an attack on social ills with the intention that this can bring transformation or change. (2)

Bawa is in effect saying that in *Trials of Brother Jero* Soyinka criticizes the belief in destiny or fate is a folly for which satire is the most effective medicine. Worcester says that satire is instrumental in fighting escapist tendencies.

Satire has always been a powerful agent in the secularization of thought. For it directs men's attention to their own conduct and teaches them that their faults lie in themselves not their stars. (128)

Writers of satire in Africa in general and Kenya in particular embrace satire means of changing the attitudes of the governed and those who govern them in order to improve the society. J. C. Ball argues that satire attacks very precisely certain historical particulars. (Ball:2003) One of the most prominent subjects of satire is the disillusionment with post colonial governance in Africa. Satire has been used to relay the theme of betrayal and corruption by the African ruling elite. Mahd Ashraf in *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature (IJSELL)* discusses the satires of Ngugi wa Thiongo's and Chinua Achebe's, Wizard of The Crow and A man of The People respectively. He says that the post colonial African novel embraces the mode of satire because it is most appropriate for the most immediate purpose.

Post independence African novel reflects disillusionment of writers with African reality. Corruption, mainly political, and other forms is scrutinized by these writers in their

fictional renderings. As such satire has become a favorite form of writing to express their disillusionment. (Bhatt 2014: 17)

Achebe has employed the use of sarcasm and irony in his satire of the post independence African leaders. Ashraf says that the tone of the writer reveals the writers intentions.

What makes the book a satire is its tone. Very often Odili the narrator pauses and makes comments on the events happening in the novel with knowledge of pretensions of politicians like Chief Nanga. The whole story is narrated in the ironic tone. The very title 'a man of the people' is ironic. Chief Nanga who is called a man of the people is anything but a man of the people. This we know when we unravel the discrepancy between what he says and what he does; what he is meant for and what he is acting for. (17)

Notably, Achebe does not spare the ruled in his satire; he indicts the likes of Odili of complicity in his satire in the same way that he satirizes intolerance in the rulers. Odili is depicted as contesting for a public office not out of ideals but out of sheer revenge. Ashraf argues that the events and atmosphere in Achebe's novel match the Nigeria of the 1960s.

He argues that Ngugi uses burlesque and magical realism to mock the ruling elite in his novel Wizard of The Crow. Ngugi satirizes the repressive state security machinery that is consistent with the Kenya of the 1970s. When Machokali and Sikiokuu surgically enlarge their eyes and ears respectively they do so to enhance the performance of these organs so that they can spy into the private lives of the citizens whose right to reasonable freedoms this very government is supposed to protect.

### **2.2.2 Satire in contemporary Kenyan fiction**

Ngugi wa Thiongo has used satire to castigate the Kenyan Government for betrayal of the revolutionary cause that independence was supposed to herald. Ngugi's satires depict

fictional states that implode just after they seem to have escaped the shackles of colonialism. Ngugi is actually to the Kenyan government what Soyinka was to successive Nigerian regimes. Ngugi has written several satirical works in which he satirizes the Kenyan government. In The Devil on The Cross, Ngugi uses satire to criticize the attitude of the African government that takes over from the departing colonial government. The ruling elite have actually inherited the structures that had been established by the colonial government and they use these to acquire wealth and influence at the expense of their subjects. Murunga and Nassongo in Kenya: the Struggle for Democracy describe Ngugi as a revolutionary who feels betrayed by the African ruling elite.

The main feature of the popular novel is its immediacy; it seems to explore the post-colonial socio- economic situation of the ordinary citizens without the slightest attempt at romanticizing the traditional way of life. This is a feature of the works of the authors mentioned in the previous paragraph. Interestingly it is also a feature of Ngugi's latest works. While Weep not Child or The River Between have an aspect of history in them, I Will Marry When I Want attacks the land issues of the day without trying to dissipate the blame.

The literary icons have had their day and Ngugi's novels and plays are having been subject of scholarly debates. However the emergence of the popular novel could have seen satire become the preserve of the popular novel.

The choice of the text is informed by the emergent trends of a body of literature previously deemed of little academic values turning out to have the same themes and styles as the literary icon. It has been argued that the East African Novel actually owes its

origins to the works of Ngugi wa Thiongo. But besides Ngugi are other writers like Meja Mwangi, Mwangi Ruheni, Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye and many others whose contribution to the body of Kenyan fiction can no longer be ignored.

Features of satire dominate the discourse in Ngugi Wa Thiongo's novels. In Petals of Blood for instance tone has been used to satirize the selfish nature of politicians from Ilmorog. Christian converts have been satirized in the novel The River Between. Ngugi uses tone and irony to satirize the obsession with doctrines of a strange religion which is actually at war with African traditions.

Ngugi's play, I will Marry When I Want however is an example of what happens when satire hits its target. This is a political satire that changed the view of the government of the day towards the playwright. It appears that satire has instead moved underground instead becoming a feature of popular fiction because popular novels are seldom subject of debates that may illuminate the subversive nature.

Leonard Kibera's novel, Voices in The Dark, is an example of political satire in which the novelist attacks betrayal by the ruling elite and tribalism. In this novel just like Ayi Kweyi Armah's The Beautiful Ones Are Not yet Born, Kibera latches onto the image of filth and excrement in his attack on betrayal by the ruling elite and tribalists.

Although Meja Mwangi's The Last Plague is described as satire its view on death and disease is characteristic of dark humor the novel could therefore be an example of a tragicomedy.

Chris Wasike has examined the efficacy of satire in Wahome Mutahi's novels The Jail Bugs and Three Days on The Cross. These he argues, are texts that employ satire in their

attack on the excesses of oppressive governance structures. He says that satire is a very powerful tool because beyond poking fun and ridiculing folly, it also means to admonish and correct wickedness. He further argues that the success of a satire as a style in fictional works depends on the interplay of the diction in a text and the particular social occasions that countenance specific satirical techniques. He argues that from a linguistic point of view satire uses specific diction and devices such as sarcasm, ridicule, humor, irony and wit. However it is inevitable that other literary techniques come into play inadvertently to capture the critical and comical mood associated with satire.

Maupeu and Mutahi (2005) describe Wahome Mutahi's works as belonging to the popular fiction genre. This is a term that is used to refer to the corpus of fiction produced by African intelligentsia that emerged as protest to elite literature that is modeled on the European fiction. While elite literature is heavily influenced by F R Leavis' *The Great Tradition* popular fiction owes no allegiance to European literary traditions. Indeed they argue that popular literature interrogates more immediate social issues that were hitherto confined to the periphery by canonical writers.

An examination of Mutahi's fiction reveals concerns with practical issues and immediate concerns and this brings to question the assessment of scholars right from Taban's assertion that popular literature is not committed to social issues. Maupeu and Mutahi summarize the contribution of Wahome Mutahi to literary scholarship.

It is argued that Mutahi's work, coming at a particular socio historical moment, has been critical in radically redefining the popular and thus enabling an understanding of creativity from a non elitist view of culture. (2005: 124)



They further demonstrate that Mutahi's work address the follies, misdeeds and dilemmas of traditional centres of authority.

In Another Last Word Taban Lo Liyong says that literature must have a cause to advance in the society:

'Popular literature is escape literature; that is it's based on fantasies or fantastic stories; serious literature tends to interpret life; uses language in a more meaningful way, with all the appropriate symbolism and other figures of speech. ' (4)

Otherwise it becomes pointless; he recommends that existent texts should be examined to investigate their literary value.

While Wahome Mutahi's novels have been studied for merits as works in satire, his beginnings as a newspaper columnist pose a question that is yet to be answered. The humour columns that were in the newspapers seemed to have no serious underlying intentions and this is what defines satire. However the novels testify to the writer's prowess as a satirist.

J. C. Ball in Satire and The Post Colonial Novel has traced the journey towards the formulation of a theory of satire that should be able to accommodate the complexities of post colonial environment. One of the initial theories of satire suggests that satire is actually a realization that the past was better than the present. According to J. C. Ball,

The Golden age represents a historical order and the satirist prefers the orderly known past to the chaotic present and the unknown future. The past has sanctity of myth – the object of satire is a present danger or perversion of the hallowed norm. (Ball 2003 :09)

Quite a few postcolonial novels in Africa seem to idealize the pre-colonial age. However Ball argues that the binary axis of the golden age model cannot cater for the works that satirize the African rulers of the newly independent African states.

He gives the examples of Ngugi's Devil on The Cross and Achebe's A Man of The People as examples of texts that basically defy the golden age theory of satire. Secondly, he argues that Post colonial satire cannot afford to ignore the causes or the origins of the character traits that are satirized. However satire must have a definite target and the moment the target of the satire, by the very design of the satire, is able to pass blame the sting of the satire dissipates therefore weakening the message.

Elizabeth Ogweno has studied satire in the Song of Lawino and Song of Ocol and mentions that there are many creative texts in the satiric mode. Political Satire dominates the scene with Francis Imbuga's play Betrayal in The City which is critical of the post independence African rulers corrupt tendencies. In the play, Imbuga uses characterization and irony to achieve satire. Okot pBitek's poem Song of Ocol has a similar message on African politicians. Chinua Achebe's A Man of The people is a satirical critical look at the nature of both accomplished politicians and politicians in the making. It is a satire on hypocrisy. Ayi Kwei Arma's novel The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born similarly studies the avarice of the leaders of the just independent African states.

While Okot pBitek's poetry can be studied using the golden age theory of satire, none of the other texts can be studied using the golden age theory. While Ball does not necessarily surmise that the diversity of satire precludes the formation of a simple theory,

he does assert the unsuitability of the Golden age theory to the study of post colonial satire.

However, a discernible pattern runs through political satire. George Orwell's Animal Farm seems to have the same motif as Achebe's A Man of The people and Armah's The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born; they embrace the irony of the oppressed becoming the oppressor. George Orwell's Animal Farm is a classic that satirizes the changes in the ruling class. Both Achebe and Armah satirize the ruling class in their respective texts.

However, political satire has its consequences since satire by design attacks a category of people. While most of these texts received a great deal of critical acclaim over their contribution to the development of satire as a literary genre Ngugi's satire especially in his later works caused him to flee his country. Emma Dawson argues that the last years of President Kenyatta had similar effect on East African fiction as those of Idi Amin in Uganda.

Yet another issue that seems to emerge in satire is whether a novel, a play or a novel is a pure work of satire or whether satire could be just one of the outstanding features of a literary text. In Ideology and Form in African Prose and Poetry Emanuel Ngara has extensively studied Okot pBitek's poem taking a critical view of the poet's choice medium for his message. He says that Okot's satire fails because of his choice of medium and his portrayal of his persona Lawino. He also argues that The Song of Ocol is no reply to Lawino. However the songs have similar characteristics to the oral form the lampoon. The lampoon is an oral variant of poetic satire. This means that the notion that satire has its origins in the works of the likes of Aristophanes or Juvenal ignores the fact that the

genre did exist elsewhere just under different names. In any case the trickster in the African folk tale correlates to the didactic function that satire serves.

Kenya has emerged from the “literary desert” (as was once put by Taban Lo Liyong) and now there is more fiction than there is an audience for it. In Moving the Center: The Struggle for Cultural Freedom, Ngugi Wa Thiongo suggests that one of the roles for literary scholarship is setting of standards for literary works. Taban Lo Liyong’s view of the emerging corpus of fiction is one consideration that Ngugi takes into account in his argument.

Fiction in Kenya has split into two categories. While elite writers from Makerere retain their approach which is deemed to be broad in outlook in terms of discussing universal issues, a new breed of writers that write about problems of urbanization have come up. Roger Kurtz regards fiction by Charles Mangua, David Mailu, Meja Mwangi, Mwangi Ruheni as urban literature. The term popular literature describes what scholars initially rejected but has claimed an incredible audience locally.

Charles Mangua’s Son of A Woman, Kurtz argues is the first of fiction that Chris Wanjala among other scholars have rejected as popular and undeveloped literature. These writers have crime, prostitution and joblessness as their main themes. Meja Mwangi writes majorly about postcolonial disillusionment in his novels Down River Road and The Cockroach Dance. Mutahi’s novels, Three Days on the Cross and The Jail Bugs have been studied for their use of satirical techniques.

The repressive tactics that characterized the last decade of KANU regime is the subject of Wahome Mutahi’s two novels Three Days on The Cross and The Jail Bugs. The

emergence of Aids and HIV is the subject of several novels, The Mysterious Killer, Chira Mutahi's House of Doom and Gitaa's Crucible for Silver and Furnace for Gold, Meja Mwangi's The Last Plague and Nice people.

The Last Plague is humorous depiction of the social scene in Kenya after the emergence of HIV the Aids causing virus and can be regarded as an example of dark humor. However, Nice People regards the discourse on the pandemic an opportune moment to address social undercurrents that actually aggravate human suffering. Wamugunda Geteria, like Wahome Mutahi, has appropriated satire to convey their social grievances.

Having established the definition, characteristics and the motives of satire in general this chapter has shown the social functions of satire. In the subsequent chapter this study closes in on the novel Nice People and to assess it features as a work of satire. This research will attempt to study the contribution of the novel Nice People to satire in Kenya.

## CHAPTER THREE

### SATIRE IN NICE PEOPLE

Ngugi wa Thiongo unequivocally asserts the role of satire in the society as that of moralizing the society by holding up the norms and chastising deviant behavior.

Satire takes for its province a whole society, and for its purpose, criticism. The satirist sets himself certain standards and criticizes society when and where it departs from these norms. He invites us to assume his standards and share the moral indignation which moves him to pour derision and ridicule on society's failings. He corrects through painful, sometimes malicious laughter. (1972 :55)

Satire must be studied in its both socio economic and cultural background for full appreciation of the author's concerns. Although this study does not take Marxist approaches, it is necessary at this point to appropriate Marxist ideology to elucidate the thrust of the novel Nice people. The title for instance can most conveniently be explained in Marxist terms. It is both a social and economic construct and represents the views of the petty bourgeoisie. Nice People refers to head teachers, pilots, doctors, and government bureaucrats. A decade into independence the elite, who seem to have benefitted most from Africanisation, replacing the formerly white bourgeois civil service in Kenya, comprise the bulk of the individuals that Geteria discusses in this novel. They view themselves as superior to the lower social groups and attempt to blame them for the proliferation of sexually transmitted infections.

Wamugunda therefore appropriates the laughter of satire to subvert the dominant social construct of the 1980s. The novel has an urban setting and the characters comprise young men out to make a living being contrasted with young women who for want of skills for

decent livelihood are forced to resort to prostitution to supplement their income. On one side of the divide are young upcoming professionals working in a national health facility the Kenya National Hospital, a banker and his wife who is a government secretary, a priest and an army major. On the other side are prostitutes and jobless women who are forced into compromising situations by their economic want.

The author also discusses the place of marriage in providing convenient cover under which immorality can proliferate undetected and unchecked. In a study of the historical setting of this novel we must take into account the emergence of the petty bourgeoisie as the unseen yet influential dimension to the discourse in this novel. The novel countenances the poor who out of living in unsanitary conditions and being without the wherewithal to obtain medical care expeditiously and in conditions of privacy become the stronghold of disease. Medical personnel whose prerogative it should be to guard the patients confidentiality become the mouthpiece of scorn and condemnation of the petty bourgeoisie. The storyline of the text has considerable relation to the circumstances surrounding the discovery of human immunodeficiency virus in Kenya in the 1980s.

Underneath the veneer of a moralistic society lies a social fabric soaked in hot and bubbling promiscuity. While some of the author's creations put up a show of normal family life others have let themselves go. Although moralists find it appalling that the author makes some suggestion of unnatural sexual tendencies such as sodomy and threesomes the author seems to have no apologies for that; this novel in fact treats human sexuality, deviant or otherwise, as one of its major themes.

The setting of the novel is just before the discovery of the Aids causing HIV virus. By tracing the rise of the epidemic Geteria focuses on the most important issue of our times. However it should be noted that Geteria accuses the whole society of complicity. Before the deadly virus came, he seems to argue, the society was steeped in reckless promiscuity. When it did, it found a fertile environment in which to thrive: hypocrisy. This study seeks to assess the success of the novel Nice People as a work of satire from the parameters envisaged by Hodgart in his book Satire

I would suggest that true satire demands a high degree both of commitment to and involvement with the painful problems of the world and simultaneously a high degree of abstraction from the world. (Hodgart 1969:11)

Wamugunda Geteria's argument in the novel Nice People is simple. Sexually transmitted infections are a medical problem. Therefore those who are so unfortunate as to contract such should be accorded appropriate medical attention expediently. Although this is logical, it is not what happens in reality. The notion that sexually transmitted infections are a preserve of some human beings and not wayward behavior is making the society to condemn those suffering from them. So blind are the modern day moralists that they do not realize the potential of sexually transmitted diseases to wipe humanity off the face of the earth.

The purpose of this project was to examine the novel using stylistics approach of literary analysis to establish whether Geteria is using inherent features of language such as irony, tone, paradox or exaggeration as well as literary elements of characterization, flashback and the narrative voice to chastise the modern day society over perceived hypocrisy and pretense. For ease of study the satirized have been divided into several categories.



### **3. 1 Satire on unfaithful couples**

The novel Nice People portrays a community that due to social prejudice associates sexually transmitted infections with poverty and not wayward behavior. We use poverty in the sense of inability to meet basic needs that leads to living in squalor and having to exchange sexual services for money that characterizes the lives of those accused of spreading sexually transmitted infections. This takes us back to the setting of this novel in the 1980s when prostitutes were accused of spreading disease and death. In blaming the spread of sexually transmitted infections on those deemed immoral, moralists discouraged the provision of medication to combat these diseases. The community depicted in the novel has put people into two categories.

On one hand there are the wayward, the immoral, prostitutes and their clientele who, according to the society depicted, are not only in morbid danger of contracting sexually transmitted infections but also deserve to be punished for immoral behavior. These are represented by Mumbi and Halima. On the other hand there are “nice people” who are so trustworthy, straightforward, dependable and moral. The nice people are not in danger of contracting VDs because they are ostensibly in monogamous relationships and not promiscuous like those other people.

Using the image of the ostensibly the happily married and financially secure couple Geteria satirizes unfaithfulness in marriage that he deems pernicious to the society. This stereotype is at the heart of Geteria’s satire. In the novel, the proprietary of a boarding facility, in an effort to rid his premises of cheap prostitutes looking for lodging for their clientele, raises the accommodation charges and the end result is that only individuals of

means can afford the services of the facility. This is the author's description of the sort of people patronizing the facility.

In 1978, Kambo looked at his palace. He reflected on all the people who had patronized it – justices of peace, permanent secretaries, bankers, housewives, personal secretaries, registered nurses, headmasters, pilots, policemen, lawyers, Members of Parliament. All these people came for morning and afternoon sessions with their lovers. Others for overnight stays most of which ended at two or three in the morning so that the patrons returned to their spouses before morning. He named it, "NICE PEOPLE'S RENDEZVOUS". (Geteria 1992: 98)

This is the narrator's description of the origins of the name of the lodging facility owned by one John Kambo. The proprietor, a former conductor and driver for the Overland Transport Company (OTC), has some experience in handling clients of repute for the prestigious public transport firm and had acquired experience of how to run reputable facilities. Not only are his facilities clean and with running water but his clients too are people of standing in the community. Notably, however, these nice people do not visit the place in the company of their wives. They do so in the company of paramours and it is only afterwards that they return to their wives or husbands.

However, one may also notice that the list virtually makes the petit bourgeoisie in a capitalist economic system. Simply put, those who are financially well off are the people called nice people and Geteria is cleverly poking fun at the elite that can afford the privilege of hiding their extra marital affairs in such facilities as The Nice People's Rendezvous that are all over the country. This is in contrast to the Halima's of this world who are turned out of such a facility because their presence could bring such a reputable facility into disrepute. This is the first instance of irony. What, anyway, is the difference between what the narrator has gone to do with Mrs. Maimba and what any self confessed

prostitute would go to do there? The narrator describes his experience of the Nice People's Rendezvous on an occasion that he visits it in the company of his sugar mummy, Mrs. Maimba.

By the time Eunice and I visited it, it was what could be described as a nuptial or coupling house. Men and women and in particular middle aged men and young women, visited the rendezvous standing in pairs like in the Noah's Ark. They paid money at the counter, received a cake of soap, a towel and a key, then proceeded without further explanations to their respective rooms. (p98)

These are the people that the writer describes as 'nice' and the author's description of their rendezvous of choice and their favorite past time. The manner in which the adjective nice has been used therefore foregrounds the term nice. After the protagonist has had a good time with a Mrs. Maimba, a married woman he encounters her husband, Mr. Maimba on their way out.

"We have to be going back now," she said getting out of bed and proceeding with the ritual of showering, powdering herself, applying make her make-up. I preferred bathing in my flat and so other than dabbing my sweat off with a towel, I put on my clothes and shoes then walked down the steps that would take me out of Eunice Maimba's clutches for a few days.

We had just handed over the keys to the receptionist when I saw a familiar figure coming out of a black Mercedes 280, one of the few cars of that type in the country. He opened the door and let out a slim looking young lady, not very much older than GG's daughter, Mumbi. Eunice Maimba saw him and let out a curse.

"So he also knows this place ..... ? And he has a lover in addition to my maid!" She said looking at her husband. I could have fainted when I recognized Godfrey Maimba, however, Eunice held my arm firmly and walked me away. Her husband took the arm of the little girl, no doubt his daughter's age and pulled her in the opposite direction towards the reception desk. I was neither sure nor cared to know if he recognized us. All I felt was pity for men and women who believed that in all married relationships men and

women lived in strict observation of the biblical statement that “and the twain shall be one flesh and let no man put them asunder”. (99)

A reader would therefore question what is so likeable about the people or even the lodging facility because so far there really is nothing likeable about the characters described. Moreover, one should even question why men and women involved in extra marital affairs should be deemed nice. In this episode Geteria employs dramatic irony to reveal to us what both Mr. and Mrs. Maimba do not know; they have visited a whoring house on the same day. This is in a deliberate effort to reveal something about the characters as typical representatives of this particular social group.

Later in the narrative, readers are surprised that such a man can take a moral high ground and accuse his wife of trying to infect him with a sexually transmitted infection. But we are equally baffled at, on the one hand, the concerted efforts of the wife in protecting herself from the husband when he appears to have contracted the green monkey disease and the determination of the husband to ensure he infects his wife, on the other. In this episode Geteria’s irony is critical of hypocrisy and pretense in married couples and it should be restated at this point that both the husband and wife are responsible for their situation. The wife sleeps with Munguti to avenge the husband’s infidelity when he caught her with their house help. Maybe she took the advice that Munguti so recklessly proffered that “the only way to sort out unfaithfulness in marital relationships was to join the multiple sinning multiple lovers.”(100)

Geteria’s treatment of these characters is a warning against hypocrisy. The Maimba’s pretence makes them casualties of the disease but this is not before the family has fallen apart when the wife loses her sanity after catching the husband and her maid in the act.

The second image that Geteria uses to advance his satire on unfaithful couples is the episode on Phil Ogunya. This is yet another of these well married individuals of high social class who could be deemed nice. This veterinary officer has extra marital affairs and fears that he has actually infected his wife with a sexually transmitted infection. He does not want the wife to know this yet he wants her to be treated, all the same. He therefore sends her to Dr. Munguti. It is an awkward but humorous situation. Munguti finally reckons that he cannot treat her without examining her genitalia. But how again would he justify such an examination? The lady is not aware of why she is there! Munguti therefore bites the bullet.

“I cannot treat your wife without her consent and I require to examine her genitalia to be able to tell how serious or otherwise her condition may be.” I proffered.

“No you cannot let her know.”

“Then I may tell her that I am looking for sores.”

“No you cannot do that.”

“I am afraid you may not understand how serious the situation is. Untreated syphilis will not only kill your wife but re-infect you!” I warned him

In this instance Geteria gives away the irony.

I could not understand how a person who had gone through university education albeit veterinary could be so naïve with regard to disease diagnosis and treatment.  
(Geteria 1992:74)

Readers however know what even the doctor does not seem to know. Ogunya wants to keep secret his infidelity and he is going to this extent to ensure that not only does he continue with his paramour but he also keeps his wife healthy. Interestingly this man turns up with the other woman, Naomi, and wants Munguti to ‘handle her the way he handled his wife’. Geteria however does not let Ogunya off so lightly. Eventually

Ogunya is caught in the act by a rival and stabbed in the buttocks. He is hospitalized for a month.

Here Geteria has once again interwoven dramatic and situational ironies to make us laugh at unfaithful couples. Situational in the manner in which Ogunya wants his wife treated but his behavior precludes objective diagnosis which is actually prerequisite for medical intervention. And dramatic in that Mrs. Phil is puzzled that a doctor would want to treat her yet she is not even aware that she is ailing.

Geteria however spares Mrs. Phil bad tidings as he warns his readers of the dangers of randy behavior.

The image of Dr. 'Long' Wahome injects the complication that would be necessary in showing the equality of humans where sex is concerned. This doctor has had a longstanding affair with his secretary and actually intends to marry her. Munguti introduces us to this character whom he meets in Mombasa.

After this academic exercise, we went on to further experiences. Dr. Wahome had been married now for six years. He had two daughters and a loving wife but his secretary had made serious inroads into their lives and she was now a type of a co-wife for him. (110)

The narrators comment about Wahome, when he contemplates, his need further investigation. He says:

"I immediately placed him in the group of Mr. Maimba type who were only slightly polygamous rather than promiscuous." (110)

This kind of comment does recur later in the narrative when the narrator wonders where his lover Mrs. Maimba could have caught an infection.

Mrs. Maimba came to me complaining of itching and burning in her posterior. I examined her and discovered she had contracted trichomonas vaginalis. She said that

other than I and her husband she did not indulge in sex with anyone else. I also told her that other than she and Nduku, I was also quite faithful. (125)

The comments are not just at variance with the meanings that they evoke in the context. “Slightly polygamous” denotes a middle ground between promiscuity and unfaithfulness which does not hold in reality. One is either faithful to his legally wedded and socially recognized spouse or plain promiscuous.

Katie Wales argues that when irony targets a specific entity it becomes sarcastic.

“Directed against another person irony is often sarcastic serving as an oblique polite form of criticism” (Wales 1989: 630)

Munguti’s thoughts on Wahome are primarily ironical and secondly target Wahome. Geteria’s understatement in that context is therefore sarcastic. Geteria has employed sarcasm to satirize unfaithfulness in marriage. Geteria’s understatement in this context is therefore sarcastic. The same applies to Munguti’s denial ‘I also told her that other than she and Nduku, I was also quite faithful.’ To whom therefore is he faithful among the two? Moreover Geteria’s main issue in the novel is hypocrisy. These comments when viewed against the realism in this novel eschew the moral ground that these characters insist on taking. The bourgeois Maimbas, Ogunyas and Dr. Wahome symbolize both hypocrisy and immorality in married couples, and, by showing their hypocrisy, the author is using situational irony, dramatic irony and sarcasm to satirize unfaithful couples in the society and the social morals based on hypocrisy (‘do not get caught and when indeed caught deny’).

Formalist approaches to literary analysis rely entirely on the text for its interpretation. We therefore have no choice but to examine the context in which the term nice people is used. There is incongruity between the term and what it has been used to describe in this context. This is called verbal irony. The title of the text is therefore sarcastic just in itself. Stylistic analysis does not stop at describing the linguistic features of text; it goes on to describe the possible purpose of the described linguistic features.

In A Dictionary of Stylistics, Katie Wales affirms the ultimate aim of stylistics in the study of a text.

The goal of most stylistic studies is not just to describe the formal features of a text for their own sake but in order to show their functional significance for the interpretation of the texts in order to relate literary effects to linguistic causes where these are felt to be relevant. (Wales 1989:438)

The relevance of the title in the novel may be investigated with regard to the theme of the novel and also in relation to the trends in literary discourse.

Use of sarcastic title has formidable precedence in African and European fiction. It can be traced back to Chinua Achebe's satirical work A Man of The People. In this novel Achebe has used sarcasm to satirize the prototype of the African leaders just after independence. Chief Nanga, the main character in the novel, epitomizes greed that characterized the satirized individuals. It is notable that the protagonist bearing that title is anything but a statesman. He does not deserve the title, but Achebe is referring to him as A Man of The People because the incongruity between such a title and the reputation it refers to ridicules the individual discussed. This is Ngugi's assessment of the character in Achebe's novel in Homecoming:



Chief the Honourable MA Nanga MP is a corrupt and uncultured minister of culture of a corrupt regime in an independent African state. In a country where the majority of the peasants and workers live in shacks and can only afford pails for excrement, the minister lives in a 'princely seven bathroom mansion with its seven gleaming silent action water closets.' He only arranges for particular roads to be tarred, with an eye to votes in the next election, to ensure the arrival of his buses –ten luxury buses supplied to him by the British Amalgamated on the 'never – never'. Elections are a mockery of democracy, with thuggery, violence and rigging allied to British commercial interests. ( 1980:54)

In her MA thesis Masumi Odari aptly describes Nanga the protagonist as “a man of himself.”

Nikolai Gogol in his classic political satire The Government Inspector uses a sarcastic title. Once again, the character so en does not deserve the title. The title character is an impostor who, on realizing that the government officials in a provincial town have mistaken him for a government inspector who is to travel to the town incognito, takes advantage of their hospitality. Hlestacov, for this happens to be his name, is no government inspector. In Henrik Ibsen's An Enemy of The People, the title character Dr. Stockman has the welfare of the town at heart. The man is not an enemy of the people. It is his opponents that have fooled the masses into condemning him. And just like in its predecessors, the title character is an exact antithesis of expectations. Therefore in this novel, nice people are not.

Therefore Geteria is using sarcastic title to reprove the hypocrisy behind the moralist stance which is impeding the fight against sexually transmitted infections. The sarcasm creates laughter, but after the laughter we realize that the satirist is telling these moralists to change or they will face the fate that befalls these fictional characters. Therefore, the use of sarcastic title is well established in literature and is in itself a satirical technique.

Readers can therefore categorize the satirical discourse in the novel as a subversion of one of the most dominant social stereotypes. The model monogamous family may be after all a front. In this they would argue that the essence 'nice' is a fallacy that has proliferated as a result of the views of the dominant social class. It should be noted that the view that some people are nice, while devoid of scientific basis, was actually advanced by government authorities who blamed the proliferation of sexually transmitted infections on prostitutes of Majengo, whose fictional representation is part of this novel. Using the image of the capitalist approved successful family, Geteria constructs the duplicity that exposes the family unit to disease. Later in the narrative, the husband, a successful banker, suspects that his wife is having extra marital affairs and the authors construction of him shows that he is so suspicious of her that he resorts to anal sex believing that thus he can successfully avoid contracting any disease that his wife may have contacted in her loose life. Geteria exploits the stylistic technique, dramatic irony to show us that this man is just as immoral as his wife and we as readers are apt to conclude that it is this man's guilt that he projects upon his wife. Using dramatic irony Geteria subverts the notion of monogamous sexual relationships being a solution to the spread of sexually transmitted infections. Wamugunda demonstrates that hypocrisy and duplicity is responsible for the suffering of humans.

### **3.2 Satire on unethical doctors**

Geteria reconstructs the image of medical practitioners embroiled in vice to advance this theme. Here he seems to rely on irony and characterization to achieve the satirical effect. When the protagonist's grandfather refuses to take medicine from his physician because he does not trust him the ensuing discussion opens a can of worms.

“You must go and see your grandfather. He said that he will not take anyone’s medicine except yours.”

“Oh mum but why?”

“He believes that doctors at Machakos have been giving him diluted drugs so that he continues to pay more medical bill.”

“Is that possible mama?”

“Well Kenya is not what you left it, the policemen pray for more criminals so that more bribes are generated, the magistrates want cells to be full, so do prison warders. We also hear that lawyers are abetting crime so that they can earn more,” she answered. “And you doctors want more gonorrhoea, syphilis and herpes so as to get more work and therefore more money so they say.” (6)

This is how Geteria makes his thematic concerns explicit. For this purpose he constructs the fictional character with interesting views on the working conditions for doctors. Dr. Gichinga, Munguti’s supervisor during internship says that corruption is an inevitable consequence of capitalism. Geteria is using irony to make fun of Gichingas of this world with regard to their fickle attempt to justify unethical behavior.

For the next one week I worked under Dr. Gichinga. I had found him a bit of an eccentric. I, however, began to understand him as days went by. From euthanasia he argued on corruption as an inevitable ingredient in societies such as ours struggling with a capitalism it had; imposed upon it by the imperialists.

“If you are among thieves and robbers and dishonest men how could you survive with your honesty?” he once asked me.

“No idea,” I answered candidly.

“You see this hospital expects us to be honest with drugs when the supreme tender board has been dishonest in its acquisition methods.”

“Oh!”

“They are paying us peanuts while expatriate doctors are housed and paid three times the Kenyan doctors’ pay. Expatriates use the government cars that we have no access to. These foreigners are allowed three month vacation while we receive one, yet we are supposed to sweat just as effectively.”(12)

Gichinga is an archetype of these unscrupulous medical practitioners to who personal gain overrides ethical concerns. He has private clinics in Nderu and River Road to supplement his income as a KCH doctor. However there is much more that this man could do for profits. One morning an x- ray machine is delivered to Munguti at the River Road Clinic. However there is something mysterious about it. Munguti wonders why its appearance should remain secret.

“Dr. Waweru Gichinga asked that we deliver these here,” said one of the porters as he placed the crates at the patients’ waiting room. They appeared fairly heavy but I did not bother to ask what the contents were. Later in the day Dr. Gichinga telephoned and asked if the goods had been delivered. It was at that time he said he had finally managed to buy an x- ray machine. I was terribly overjoyed because I now knew our work was to be far easier besides being more lucrative. Dr. Gichinga however cautioned me that we were not as yet to broadcast the new acquisition as he did not want the bank that had lent him money to know where this machine was located. Although the explanation was highly suspect, I did not at the time bother about it, all I knew was that we were to treat the x-ray machine as a tool for our clinics only. (Geteria 1992:52)

It turns out that Dr. Waweru Gichinga of Kenya Central Hospital has actually stolen the most expensive medical equipment and goes to hide it in his private River Road clinic. Later Wekesa a police officer accosts Munguti. He is investigating the disappearance of an X-ray machine from KCH.

“Dr. Munguti, I have been looking for you?”

“Am I in trouble again chief inspector?” I asked Paul Wekesa whom I had come to like an honest man who loved his job and did it without well without any malice.

“It is about that X-ray machine that was in the River Road Clinic.”

“What of it?”

“We would like to trace it?”

“It is in the clinic.”

“No, it is not.”

“Then you must ask Dr. Waweru Gichinga. Why do you want it anyway?”

“We would like to check its serial number and a few things about its purchase.”

“Oh!” I smelled a rat. I had all along wondered why the machine was kept with a bit of secrecy and recalled my employer talking of transferring it to another clinic he was starting in the clinic area especially for theatrical and surgical purposes.

Wekesa outsmarted Gichinga this time. They managed to trace the X-ray in his mother’s *shamba*, buried in a banana plantation together with several bottles of medicines, vials and medical stores equipment , all bearing the incriminating label “KCH, GK”.  
(Geteria1992: 101)

While Dr. Gichinga’s initial comments may pass as typical of any disgruntled professional, his actions cannot. This is a thief masquerading as a medical practitioner. Dr. Gichinga is symbolic of greed for wealth. As a warning to his audience however Geteria does not let Gichinga get away with this.

The trial was brief as Gichinga accepted all the ten counts of “theft by (public) servant”. They put him in prison for four years on all counts, which amounted to imprisonment for forty years. (Geteria 1992:101)

That is not all. When Gichinga gets out of prison he learns that he has actually lost his practicing license and even his family. The wife has turned against him and his own children won’t have anything to do with him. Gichinga’s greed costs him his career and family.

The motif recurs in the text whereby Geteria examines the conduct of all these doctors against the Hippocratic oath. But he also needs his protagonists to be so knowledgeable as to eliminate the possibility of the reader questioning the writer’s sense of fair play. This is what makes the work satire. Satire is about pointing out folly. Folly is about deliberate choices and not misfortune. Disease and death are not topics of satire. Stupid

choices are. Therefore the author has to conjure a veritable image of folly that he wants to castigate.

Geteria seems to perceive what has been seen for ages. Hypocrisy in our private lives creates fertile grounds for needless suffering. While this novel is about HIV and Aids Geteria is not discussing the epidemic. Geteria is merely using the discourse on aids as platform on which to attack folly, hypocrisy and pretense. He demonstrates through the novel that these, indeed, are prejudicial to the endeavor to curing the sick and checking the spread of sexually transmitted infections.

Joseph Situma and Marjorie Oludhe MacGoye have written novels that adopt the appropriate tone for discourse on disease and death. The Mysterious Killer and Chira respectively are novels on the same theme. In Situma's novel, Just like in MacGoye's there is an air of irony. The characters are trying to live the only life they have ever known. There is only the irony that highlights the mystery about the deadly ailment. They have no explanation for how it prevents the stomach from holding food. They wonder at its potential to waste human bodies in a matter of weeks. They are in no position to appreciate epidemiology. They therefore appropriate it to witchcraft: the only proffered explanation in both texts. Notice that MacGoye's novel is Chira. Chira is a belief among the Luo community that if someone commits a taboo, he consequently grows thinner and thinner and dies. Indeed in Chira Samuel, the protagonist, does commit incest with a cousin and a cleansing ritual is carried out in an attempt to save him.

But the novel Nice People is about a community under siege from its own values; it is about members of a society causing problems in and for the very society in which they

live. And the novel demonstrates that it is the very trouble that they cause that returns to harm them. Nice People unlike Chira or The Mysterious Killer is about choices. It merely shows that the contemporary society is taking moralist ideas too far.

Unethical behavior is initially just hinted at in the novel. People suffering from sexually transmitted infections are deemed immoral and treated with contempt and scorn in the false but very strongly held belief that they lead loose lives and have therefore brought trouble upon themselves. When an attempt is made to provide free medical care for sexually transmitted infections there is an uproar. That, it is believed, will encourage loose morals. There is, however, a deeper pernicious reason. Providing free treatment for people suffering from sexually transmitted infections closes an avenue for profiteering.

“It is an interesting position but highly doubtful if it will find support. Moralists will fight it as encouraging promiscuity, some doctors will think it deprives them of lucrative business and even the N.C.C. will see it as an unnecessary strain on its budget” “But will prove with my thesis that this is one way of saving cost for the venereal disease abatement.” I insisted.

“I wish you good luck.” (Geteria 1992: 110)

Dr. Wahome is voicing the official position of the government which later even affects the performance of his thesis. And it reappears when Gichinga, while recruiting the naïve Munguti into his devious schemes makes an interesting proposition.

“This will earn you pocket money young man. That is if you choose to co-operate with me ... the government has decided that clinical officers should not man clinics but qualified medical doctors must ... eh ... You are virtually qualified and the old man will back you on the practice. You can earn double your intern allowance if you treated all the VDs of Nderu.”( Geteria 1992:13)

This is an issue that inundates this narrative yet is the real reason Munguti's colleagues find the idea of free medication so objectionable.

Later however the author uses irony to make it crystal clear. Although these medical practitioners have taken the Hippocratic oath that the author takes the liberty of providing in the novel, their profit takes precedence to saving human lives or upholding the its sanctity. G. G. and Dr. Gichinga reveal the pernicious view that they hold towards medical practice.

Dr. Gichua Gikere simply referred to as GG in the narrative, a clinical assistant is Dr. Gichinga's accomplice. He is able to conduct any medical procedure. This is how Munguti describes him.

Dr. GG at sixty-one, was extremely courageous and stoic. He circumcised boys, removed Luos' six teeth that required this form of initiation, tattooed, ear pierced and even ear-lobe carved those Maasai that required this form of ritual. However, his specialty and one he performed with a lot of joy was to help mother who needed help without the blessings of the government and to the chagrin of the Pope- whom he disdainfully referred to as the "Gods hypocrite. (48)

Geteria uses sarcasm to criticize unethical attitude towards the medical practice. Initially GG has interesting views on abortion.

"It is risky business because the law outlaws it. Secondly since it is done under clandestine conditions, this makes it intrinsically expensive. One has to conduct anesthesia, blood transfusion and related surgical tasks in a non conventional arena" Dr Gichua said raising his voice. (37)

It turns out that he is posturing. This man regards illegal abortions as a source of extra money. The youthful Munguti discovers that underneath the veneer of an intellectual GG is actually a man who could do anything for money. Halima a desperate single mother ventures into the city of Nairobi to seek livelihood. Without professional or vocational training background we learn that this woman wants to make do with life of prostitution.



However, there is a snag. She is expectant and wants the pregnancy terminated for otherwise she really has no means to take care of herself through the pregnancy. Munguti therefore advises her to see GG over the matter.

She dies in the abortion attempt and Dr. GG in an attempt to cover up dismembers her corpse and disposes of it. However, this cunning doctor tries to convince Munguti that the surgery in his clinic is blood soaked because he had slaughtered a goat in there. Munguti is not convinced.

Dr. GG made me understand that he had performed his miracle perfectly and saved a Bukoba Prostitute from committing suicide by terminating her problems and a pregnancy. I did not ask how it was done but I knew it involved a complicated surgery for which I doubted Nderu clinic or its doctor's capability. I did however observe that Dr. GG was unusually jittery, clumsy and not quite himself. He had slaughtered a goat, left the hoofs, head and white skin in the medicine store, carelessly left blood marks all over the four walls of the clinic and not even bothered cleaning the examination that he had used for butchering the goat. Everything appeared quite bizarre but I associated this with the old man's advancing senility. (Geteria92: 56)

The story of the goat is an attempt to hide the facts that GG either murdered Halima or tried to get rid of her body after she passed away in an abortive abortion attempt. The gist of the sarcasm however is in this statement.

“ Dr. GG made me understand that he had performed his miracle perfectly and saved a Bukoba Prostitute from committing suicide by terminating her problems and a pregnancy.”

In this, Munguti sounds not only sarcastic but also cynical – for GG has actually killed this woman!

Here the satirist has used sarcasm to attack doctors who have no qualms endangering lives of hapless women who seek backstreet abortion services. It should however be

noted that before GG commences on the procedure he makes casual remarks about his ability as an abortionist.

‘You mean you modern day doctors cannot cope with a thing that even old village women have dealt with for millenniums?’ he asked. ‘We have removed foetal material many a time with such simple tools. Bring the lady to the all cure Nderu clinic.’ He directed. (37)

Note his casual attitude towards abortion and it is an indication that he has a reckless attitude towards human life that he swore to protect. In any case as the police investigate Halima’s disappearance further evidence of previous murder is unearthed.

The place was a haven for those sick with VD, Kamundia had said and Wekesa had wasted fifty policeman days looking for a phantom. Four more fetuses and three more skulls had been discovered in the bush and dust bins. (58)

Evidently, Halima is neither the only nor the first casualty of abortion gone awry.

Geteria’s construction of the image of Gichinga portrays him as a killer. While we expect him to be at the forefront in preserving human life there are more bits of evidence of death at his hands than grateful patients. And his regard for human life, from his statements is beyond question. GG is therefore an example of burlesque in the novel.

The second issue is the manner in which doctors take advantage of those who suffering from sexually transmitted infections. In this novel these are portrayed as either charging high medication fees or secondly extorting incredible amount of money to provide palliative care for the terminally ill. Canaan Hospice is a facility that takes advantage of the rich who are terminally ill.

Canaan had been the brain child of Dr. Ding Singh, a medical practitioner who had also read some economics. He had seen the big gap between the rich and the poor Kenyan's, looked at their consumer habits in The Hilton, Serena, Beach Hotels while their brothers sipped *busaa* in filthy river road bars then thought he could sell Geffen goods with a special morgue he called "The deluxe final journey services." He even found out that some people in the city even paid for coffins for as much as a hundred thousand shillings. Although euthanasia was illegal in Kenya there were special cases that were entertained as part of the de-luxe final trip services. (156)

This is more of a venture capitalist that sees the need for medication as an opportunity to be exploited for financial gain and here Geteria starts his introduction of Ding Singh on a sarcastic note.

"Canaan was the brainchild of Ding Singh a medical practitioner who had also read some economics."

Once again we have to refer to Wales (1989) for an explanation of style. Although the narrator explains that Ding Singh has read economics prudence that characterizes economics of income and expenditure is hardly part of what happens at Canaan. Exploitation is not economics. Therefore the statement quoted above is sarcastic. This facility offers euthanasia or mercy killing services for the rich who can afford it. Eventually after the discovery of the fatal Green Monkey disease Ding Sing the proprietor of the hospice goes further to offer children as sex slaves for the dying rich to enjoy their final moments in this world. When he informs Dr. Munguti of his new plans, Munguti is shocked.

"You mean you are going to keep Aids victims here?" I asked in disbelief.

"Yes now that contact with the Aids patients has been proven as safe except in blood transfusions and in other body fluids, we can safely look after them," he argued, making me feel that he was, after all, getting humane.

“But still there is no cure,” I insisted.

“There is no cure but you have heard of old people’s home and or hospitals for the terminally sick.”

“Yes I have. It is high time Kenya had some,” I agreed with him feeling sorry that I had mistaken him for putting money considerations before his obligations to the sick.

“There are people willing to pay fortunes for spending their last days like kings and queens. We shall make them feel exactly like that, at a cost of a quarter a million shillings, of course,” I heard and nearly hit the roof in astonishment. “The men will pay ten thousand for quickies, with special condoms provided for them and the women. We’ve bought Canaan condoms too,” he added. I could not believe what I heard. My employer Dr. Ding Singh was, no doubt, insane.

“You mean you make the terminally sick pay for sex?” I asked in disbelief.

“Oh yes, they have no use for the millions in the banks they will leave behind and in any case we’ll be providing something they are currently being denied, sex.” These men had to be stopped before they went too far.

“I thought Canaan was a respectable hospice, not a bordello,” I said with disgust.

“It is a very special hospital giving the best to the terminally sick.”

“And exploiting them.”

“Oh! Who is not exploiting people through Aids? The rubber manufacturers of America are making billions out of condoms, blood banks are soaring with business. Writers and film makers are busy making hay while the sun shines with the Aids scare. We must hurry, Dr. Munguti. We could make millions and each retire comfortably by the time they discover the cure,” he said. (171)

Geteria is using exaggeration to satirize greed and the tendency to put profits before ethics. Geteria shows how the good intentions of Munguti are actually at the mercy of colleagues who, however, do not share in his philanthropy. He has developed fear of catching HIV and therefore joins Canaan out of the sheer need of working in a supportive environment. But he learns that Canaan is actually preying on the rich.

In the meantime the River Road Clinic would remain closed and I would hibernate away from it and its risks in Canaan Hospice where the problem was to provide the very best

for men and women of Major Kombo's type, those capable of paying for medical care of whatever cost. The contrast between the clientele of the River Road clinic and Canaan was exciting to observe particularly in their general demeanor, freedom in discussing their condition(s) and the absence of financial worries on the part of the Canaan people. Generally Canaan clients believed that money could conquer all maladies. (158)

Geteria' ability to present the complication as it is deserves a mention here. With the discovery of Aids Dr. Munguti now fears that treatment in a cheap facility like River Road Clinic constitutes considerable risk since the mode of acquiring this disease is still a grey area. Munguti is therefore sucked in to the vortex of evil not through his inclination but because of the sheer necessity of a secure working environment.

What is satirized is the inclination of the proprietary of the facility exploit the desire for confidentiality to reap profits.

Dr. Gichinga learnt that there was nothing new with the rich buying secrecy in private hospitals. He reminded him that when Henry the sixth had syphilis, he was reported to have eaten a pig. (157)

This is the episode in which the writer lambasts the levels to which doctors could go for profits. This is situational irony. Doctors are expected to lessen peoples suffering not rob them when they are dying. Ding Sing soon faces the wrath of the law while GG dies running away from law enforcement officers. Thus Geteria gives us a moral to his narrative. Although Dr. Munguti is a man beholden to noble intentions, vice soon catches up with him when his colleagues are implicated in a profiteering racket masquerading as a medical facility for terminally ill patients. The novel Nice People shows us how the greedy in the society somehow inveigle their interests even into the most honorable pursuits. Under the guise of providing palliative care for the terminally ill Munguti's colleagues are, he comes to learn, running a profiteering racket. To a realist Munguti is

not as bad as his colleagues. The quest to provide the poor with affordable medical care redeems him in this aspect.

In the course of his internship Dr. Munguti takes special interest in venereal diseases. These are so prevalent in the society yet those suffering from them are stigmatized and made to feel ashamed. Interestingly, he is part and parcel of this prejudiced society. The doctor realizes that it is the moralist stance that the society adopts towards those suffering from sexually transmitted infections that poses the biggest challenge to the treatment and even possible eradication of the diseases. The following quotation from the novel summarizes the crux of the matter.

I pored through books written on venereal diseases. I noticed that all of them had a moral slant towards the causes of VD's and all authors on the subject wrote about promiscuity and immorality as the major causes of the spread. Monogamous and stable relationships were advocated and recommended as preventive measures and prostitution vigorously condemned. The more I pondered over the issues the more I got convinced that the moral stance contributed toward the failure to eradicate the VD's and the costly nature with which their care was associated. I thought that if we opened up on the sex matters and treated Gonorrhoea as an ordinary disease just like the common cold, for instance, infected people would readily seek help. Public health centers and hospitals should make medicine more readily available and consequently each would cease being a hurdle to treatment. I felt that the sufferers from VD's were discriminated, ridiculed and made to feel embarrassed which resulted in their harboring and spreading the disease consciously or unconsciously. (W. Geteria 1992: 77)

Initially it is just the curable types. Later however there emerges the incurable green monkey disease. The presence of sexually transmitted infections creates opportunity for the virus causing Green Monkey disease to access the body. The eradication of sexually transmitted infections could probably have forestalled the extremities witnessed in the

wake of the pandemic. However the social attitudes, according to Geteria, have bred a conducive environment for the proliferation of the invariably fatal Green Monkey. However Geteria is no idealist and just in the words of Soyinka seeks no utopia. The hope that Geteria offers is right with the incredibly bigoted Munguti.

When Aids strikes the community, the people who were thought to be safe, Ian Brown, The Maimba's and the Army Major are the first casualties. This is however against what we expected. Mumbi the sworn prostitute is interestingly not the first casualty. This is situational irony. However the author has a more complicated message for his readers. Although Mumbi eventually succumbs to the infection she is not the first which should make the readers contemplate the ways in which Ian Brown the white man who supposedly could not harbor a sexually transmitted infection could be similar to or even inferior to Mumbi a common prostitute.

### **3.3 Satire on social pretense**

This being a research on satire it focuses on the satirist's construction of his narrative and the effectiveness of the stylistic devices that the writer has employed. The narrator first of all constructs the image of a society so buried in prejudice that it can neither appropriate scientific research to solving what are purely scientific issues nor countenance their own human frailty. The satirist's principal argument is that sexually transmitted infections are diseases just like all others and the irony here is that in the modern world and with all the available medical facilities, all we want to do is condemn the afflicted and posture about our own morals while condemning those we deem wayward. To further this cause the author has employed irony.

An author employs the kind of narrator that is only appropriate for his purpose the absurdity of his (the narrator's) perspectives notwithstanding. The author has used a young and inexperienced intern doctor to show the general attitude of people of that time towards those who suffered from sexually transmitted infections.

Formalists could argue that dramatic irony makes the reader of a particular narrative perceive the world as it is even when a character in a narrative (like the narrator in this narrative) is trying to mislead the readers. Geteria, therefore, while constructing an appropriate narrator for his narrative, uses dramatic irony to run an alternative narrative. This is probably to give the reader the choice of perspective; either the reader believes Munguti or he looks out for the numerous signposts in the narrative that indicate that the ideas that the Munguti's of this world subscribe to are mere delusions. In any case this is a study of the work as a possible work of satire and therefore it should be placed in a definite historical setting. This should mean that there are those who subscribe to the world view of the fictional Munguti. This is just the first of the numerous instances of dramatic irony in the narrative. The narrator seems oblivious to what is obvious to the reader. By constructing a narrator who mistakenly believes that he is not as immoral as the others, the writer has already injected an angle from Aristotle's concept of the tragedy into the narrative. The hero in the classic tragedy has a fundamental flaw of character that is supposed to alienate him. Such a flaw is necessary in upholding a modicum of justice in literature.

Munguti is not innocent; he is proud and arrogant. The narrator does sleep around only that he (believes he) engages nice people who cannot pass sexually transmitted infections to him. The narrator, who is actually character in the narrative, is made to look irrational.



However, Dr. Munguti is representative not only of the pretense in social life but also of the prejudice in other members of this community. It is even more interesting that his medical background cannot help him overcome social prejudice.

The fact that we as the readers are able to see though the protagonist constitutes dramatic irony. Dramatic irony refers to a situation in which the audience (readers) knows something that the character narrator does not know and therefore chooses to ignore.

Geteria creates a picture of debauchery in the novel. However the medical doctor who is supposed to behave differently is actually the very personification of deviant sexuality. The expected remedy for sexually transmitted infections turns out to be the mainstay. In this we perceive situational irony. What we see differs from what we expect.

This indeed is what Munguti is. Yet by regarding himself to be beyond the reach of sexually transmitted infections the doctor is setting himself on a pedestal and when it breaks he is devastated. The following episode should demonstrate that.

One evening one of Munguti's numerous girlfriends, Mary Nduku calls in unannounced. She is infuriated to discover that, the doctor whom she has always regarded as her exclusive territory, has been entertaining another woman. The doctor is mortified and wants her to leave but she insists on staying. Initially Mary Nduku is scandalized and cannot hide her disdain for her competitor. When it becomes apparent that the intruder is not about to cede any grounds Nduku, joins them on the bed and deliberately misconstrues Munguti's request to remove her belt which is pinching him as a coded request to undress.

The author shows us the dilemma that the two women are facing. This is a compromising situation yet whoever walks away loses this doctor, a potential husband. Furthermore the narrator has already acquainted us with Nduku's intentions for coming here. The proud Nduku is the first to blink. That the two women need no persuasion to engage in a sort of orgy is the text's biggest question the author poses to his readers. Through the technique of dramatic irony we as readers are already acquainted with Mumbi's seedy background.

"Housewives leave home and masquerade like us single girls and invade the Florida, Casablanca and most hotels in search of American sailors". (Mumbi in Geteria 1992: 82)

It is only after he has slept with both Nduku and Mumbi that he learns that Mumbi's earlier careless remark about 'American sailors' was a hint. Mumbi is a prostitute. A keen reader would see the irony. The proud yet naïve doctor deems common prostitutes beneath him. Even when Mumbi has confessed that that, that is what she actually does in Mombasa the narrator finds himself asking a question for which the answer is quite obvious.

"You mean you sell your body like a prostitute?" (p87)

This question should be held in the reader's mind for a while because its import is not really in this scene. This is not the first time Mumbi is mentioning her trade. It is only that the conceited doctor was not listening the first time.

Victor Raskin's theory of the humor stipulates the existence of two different scripts side by side in a situation that is necessary for comedy to occur. A keen look at the situation reveals that there are two divergent ideas in the atmosphere.

On one hand, Mumbi an unapologetic prostitute defends her trade against false perceptions in a very rational way. Everyone who ends up in a sexual relationship seems to be using the other for some kind of gain. Mumbi is actually telling the doctor that he has actually slept with a prostitute. Note the absurdity. On the other hand Munguti a hypocrite is forced to say she is Mumbi is no prostitute because if he admitted the infernal possibility that she could after all be a prostitute he would be admitting that he is not a nice person; he sleeps with prostitutes. Munguti the good person is seen in evil light while Mumbi the prostitute comes out in a very positive light. Put in another way the protagonist has to justify himself yet vindicating Mumbi is the only way to do it.

Raskin's theory of humor applied in this context shows that the issue at hand, the argument between the two characters, is just a matter of semantics. According to Munguti, Mumbi is not a prostitute. Mumbi is not a prostitute not because he knows this for a fact, it is because he does not associate with prostitutes but he has been associating with her. Mumbi however harbors no denial. She just says it as it is. The following day the protagonist cannot face the reality that he actually had sex with a prostitute and the worst part of it is that he has infected the prostitute with a venereal disease. Through dramatic irony once again the author shows us that being promiscuous and being a prostitute are virtually synonymous. Yet he demonstrates just like in Joseph Situma's novel, The Mysterious Killer, that there is no telling where the web of sexual (mis)adventure may end.

The author is not through with Munguti as he drives him to the edge of an abyss when he learns that he has actually contacted a sexually transmitted infection. But his humiliation

is only complete when Nduku turns up a few days later to accuse him of being responsible for infecting her.

‘Yosevu you are dirty aren’t you?’

‘Oh why?’

‘You have given me VD.’

‘Nduku listen.....’

‘I want a refund of my three hundred shillings first.’

‘For what?’

‘See for yourself, my doctor says I have gonorrhoea from you.’

‘How does he figure it is me?’

‘I am going to sue you, Yosevu’

I was not worried by either her threats of suing me or her asking me to refund some three hundred shillings. It was her accusing finger that was particularly irritating.

‘But you flirt around with your *mzungu* lover, don’t you’ I began a subject that she was loathe to discuss.

‘White men have no VD.’

‘What are you talking about?’

‘Mr. Brown is nice, he does not go with prostitutes.’

(p91)

If there is doubt about the existence of humor in this book, then this episode should clear it. It is the dramatization of the main protagonist, Dr. Munguti’s downfall. The protagonist is this time round accused not only of harboring a sexually transmitted infection but also of spreading, it malice aforethought. But the casual reader who thinks that this is the true state of affairs should bide his time and suspend his judgment because it turns out that Nduku has actually made wrong conclusion. It is Nduku, who is accusing Munguti who is actually the source of the infection!

Refer to the last lines of the repartee.

“‘But you flirt around with your *mzungu* lover, don’t you’ I began a subject that she was loathe to discuss.

‘White men have no VD.’

‘What are you talking about?’

‘Mr. Brown is nice, he does not go with prostitutes.’

(p91)

Geteria stays faithful to his argument. It is ironical for Munguti to hear these words. But he really has no defense. But we should not lose sight of the fact that this is the turning point. Munguti has just not yet faced his mortality. Just not yet. This is still the process of realization. It is this realization that enables him to shirk blame onto a white man which would have been unthinkable in the first part of the narrative. He did believe that nice people cannot get sexually transmitted infections. And hereby Geteria satirises doctors.

Through Nduku we are shown the false premises upon which some judgment on matters of disease rest. The only reason Nduku believes it is Munguti that infected her is that Muunguti is black. Apart from the notion that white men cannot contract such infections Nduku who has been sleeping with both Munguti and her white lover really has only hypocrisy to back up her claim. Interestingly however, Munguti himself has always harbored such beliefs.

By treating the main protagonist to a dosage of his own medicine the author exposes to the protagonist the fallacy in his reasoning. It is this notion that some people cannot harbor sexually transmitted infections that is perpetuating the spread. In page 118 we gather reasons to believe that the Nduku woman, whose white lover is too nice to go with prostitutes, is the source of Munguti’s infection.

Geteria brilliantly weaves a complicated web of intrigue that only keen study can unravel. This woman, who believes she is so clean that she deserves to sue Munguti for infecting her with a sexually transmitted disease, has another lover whose movements she can account for only as much as he can for hers. Mumbi, the prostitute, did have gonorrhoea but she had the presence of mind to seek treatment and her father Dr. Gichua Gikere dutifully treated her and she got cured. When Munguti confronts Mumbi with the issue she seems quite reasonably surprised and we cannot avoid making the same conclusion that Munguti does.

It is therefore Nduku, the nice person that professes no link to prostitutes that is the source of this disease. This is a case of dramatic irony intertwined with situational irony. This Ian Brown is bisexual, a fact that Munguti only discovers by accident. The young intern doctor is shocked to learn of his humanity only after he has helped transmit a VD to an equally unsuspecting young woman.

Mahd Ashraf's analysis of Ngugi wa Thiongo's *Wizard of The Crow* gives some insight into Geteria's construction of his protagonists in Nice people. Ashraf argues that Ngugi blends magical realism and burlesque in this political satire. The protagonists Machokali and Sikiokuu have had their eyes and ears respectively enlarged and enhanced in a manner that creates a sense of the grotesque.

Burlesque in written text may entail description of misshapen figures on the one hand or exaggerated character traits in the protagonist. Therefore while Ngugi's novel uses magical realism to describe misshapen characters Geteria has used characterization to create a parody of model medical officer in Dr. Munguti. This is the doctor infects

Mumbi, a prostitute with a venereal disease. Doctors according to our expectation are supposed to treat not spread disease.

### **3.4 Satire on religious leaders**

The next target of Geteria's wrath is the clergy. Using flashback the narrator takes us to his childhood encounter with an unmarried priest who had stayed celibate in order to spread the word of God more effectively. The priest who was the narrator's high schoolteacher had impressed upon the narrators hitherto young mind on the need to stay single. In response to his congregation's questions about his marital status the priest had this to say.

"I understand some of you wonder why father Guy is not married. He is not married to one person but to all the women. Whose wives do you think all these belong to," he challenged.

"To the father," the congregation answered in an uproar.

"We servants of the lord were commanded years ago not to get attached to one person. We belong to all humanity and this is why all of us including the pope must be celibate so that we can spread the word of the lord.

This is supposed to be the epitome of goodness. However the narrator relates some episodes that cast doubt on the integrity of the father. One afternoon the narrator a young boy accidentally walks in on the priest with Mrs. Saunders. This is the text.

A few days later I had an almost chocking experience when I went to Father Guy's office. The church door was open but the vestry was locked. Under normal circumstances when Father Guy was inside the church, neither the main door nor the vestry was locked and I would always walk in. This time I had to knock and when he opened after several knocks, he appeared pale, his hair was ruffled and Mrs. Saunders was sitting on the couch.

'These are the Chemistry books Father,' I explained feeling rather awkward.

‘Oh sure come in and say hello to Mrs. Saunders, she almost fainted at Kennedy’s death.’ Father Guy said without apparent emotion. I knew Robert Kennedy as the brother of the youthful American president mowed down by a gunman in Dallas sometimes back. I, however, must confess that I did not know he was popular to the people in faraway Kenya. And if that be true, then Mrs. Saunders must have extremely been affected. She was dazed. That was then. I was young and that is all I saw. If I was older, perhaps I would have seen more. (Geteria 1992: 24)

The gist of the sarcasm lies in the following text.

I knew Robert Kennedy as the brother of the youthful American president mowed down by a gunman in Dallas sometimes back. I, however, must confess that I did not know he was popular to the people in faraway Kenya.

The narrator has reservations about the relationship between the embarrassment on Mrs. Saunders’s face and the shock over the death of Kennedy. Geteria’s imitation of the clergy in this respect exaggerates negative aspects. Given that there is incongruity between the faith that the priest professes and his actions we realize that there is irony in this episode. But Geteria’s image of the father is neither balanced nor complementary. He has emphasized negative aspects of Father Benedicto than any positive trait. The father is a pretender and a hypocrite. Therefore in this episode Geteria is satirizing the clergy.

On the narrative structure I find that the author shows the potential to captivate his readers. The narrative begins with a sense of foreboding when the main character finds himself at a funeral service of an acquaintance. The reader’s interest is piqued in the manner in which the narrative starts. The creativity to that is in that when the story eventually ends we meet different circumstance from what we expected. There is intermittent use of the flashback and flash-forward narrative technique. Through an integration of the autobiographical persona and flashback and flash-forward, the author



inadvertently reveals that this is not life as it is being lived but life as it was lived. It enhances the sense of satirical tone of the narrative.

Dr. Munguti is a symbol of those that try to save the society yet their efforts are thwarted by others who deep down mean well but show acute lack of understanding of complicated situations. The writer made the following comments on the title of his novel.

“Most of the problems that we face in this world have their origins in the so called nice people who have no qualms blaming others for every other misfortune. Nice people believe that they are too good to have contributed to any of these situations in any way. The story Nice People is about HIV and when the virus was first discovered, government officers, in a mistaken move to assure the public of their safety, rushed to compartmentalize citizens into the evil that were responsible for spreading the virus and the good that were actually out of harm’s way.” (Geteria 13-12-2012)

Geteria’s driving force is the sheer fallacy of the notion that HIV is probably a scourge, it is a punishment for the evil. He gets reinforcement for this line of thought in a researcher who says:

“Aids cases worldwide now estimated at close to 150,000 will double this year partly from the widespread and dangerous belief that nice people are at little risk... ” Dr. Jonathan Mann, World Health Organization, 1998.

However one thing that is worthy of note is that the author was ahead of his time for he suggests in his text that the stigma attached to sexually transmitted infections causes those suffering from them to avoid seeking treatment. More than a decade later the wisdom of the literary artist hit home. People are urged to speak freely about HIV.

Whether this has had any positive results is not the subject of literary research. However Wamugunda Geteria goes down in history as the first literary artist to suggest an effective course of therapy for a medical problem at least in the memorable past.

## Conclusion

The novel Nice People is a successful work of satire in that it has integrated humor to reprove folly and vice in the society. That conclusion is arrived at because while the issues discussed are very serious, the writer rather than engaging in angry denunciation of institutions discussed has resorted to the use of stylistic devices to present his perspective as some kind of impersonal logic.

Wamugunda Geteria has used situational irony, verbal irony and dramatic irony to create humorous criticism of hypocrisy and vice in the society. The novel satirizes hypocrisy in religious leaders, exploitation and unethical behavior by medical practitioners and hypocrisy and pretense in ordinary members of the society.

Geteria's satire has its principal focus on medical practitioners' attitudes towards their profession. In Nice People the members of the medical fraternity, who are charged with the responsibility of providing medical care and protecting life stand accused of exploitation of the sick and the dying for profits. The novel has the use of irony and sarcasm to show how doctors take advantage of their clientele's suffering to extort huge amounts of money in exchange for medical care. Medical practitioners are also accused of causing death to their clients through recklessness.

Character construction in the narrative has necessitated the use of dramatic irony to counter the inevitable consequence of subjectivity that results from the use of a first person narrator. The writer has therefore used dramatic irony to introduce an objective perspective in the novel. By the use of burlesque he satirizes those in the medical profession that allow social prejudice to compromise their judgment both personally but

more importantly, professionally. Dr. Munguti sneers upon his patients because he deems them immoral instead of just treating them which is what he is paid to do. The same technique is used to satirize religious leaders who remain celibate but cannot really walk the talk on celibacy.

By the use of dramatic irony the novel satirizes social pretense that characterizes personal relations. The main protagonist, despite his medical training, seems to engage multiple sexual partners. He believes he cannot contract sexually transmitted infections. But through this technique that accords the readers insight into the motives of the characters, Geteria is able to deflate this kind of pride; not only does he just contract but he also transmits the infection to a prostitute.

The novel has also been found to make notable contribution to the contemporary Kenyan satiric tradition in that it expands the role of satire in a pragmatic discourse on the outbreak of HIV.

On the relationship between satire and historical particulars it is the finding of this research project that the events related in this novel have a correlation to the happenings of 1990s in the Kenyan capital of Nairobi and the surrounding and the narrative should be a subject of further research on the possible use of allegory as a narrative technique in the novel Nice People.

However Geteria's novel exposes the pitfalls of the novel as a platform for satire. His satire of the attitude of prostitutes towards protected sex fails because his circumspect portrayal of his characters dissipates the impetus for satire. He successfully portrays prostitutes as victims of capitalist system who are forced to shun the use of condoms

because that would justify the perception that even they know that they are potential source of disease.

## Appendix

### The interview with Wamugunda Geteria 13-12-2012 at The Civil Service Club

**Question:** The novel Nice People is written from a doctor's perspective are you a doctor by profession?

**Answer:** No not really. I am a forestry officer and the scientific names of various ailments that you see in the book are just a product of research. I am besides the profession a writer. Nice People is just the second novel I wrote my first is Black Gold of Chepkube.

**Question:** Since you seem to have read the narrative do you really believe that these people are nice? This is satire.

**Question:** The events in your narrative Nice People have a resemblance to the reality of Kenya specifically Nairobi in the 1980s. Do you have some unresolved grievances that you felt could be addressed through such a novel?

**Answer:** The thrust of the narrative is that when Aids was discovered in Kenya in the 1980s it was dismissed as some venereal disease that afflicted prostitutes from Majengo and the provincial administration led by the then Nairobi PC Fred Waiganjo never wasted opportunity to castigate these prostitutes for "bringing disease to a good society." *Ni hawa Malaya kutoka Majengo wanaotuletea maradhi*. This was the refrain virtually every government officer took even as it became apparent that very important members in the society, who had nothing to do with *Malaya wa Majengo*, succumbed to symptoms that were to similar to those found in those suffering from aids. ( The author named names and this is

edited from this interview due to ethical requirements of research)

**Question:** In that case why did you entitle the novel Nice People?

**Answer:** I mean, isn't it obvious? Most of the problems that we face in this world have their origins in the so called nice people who have no qualms blaming others for every other misfortune. Nice people believe that they are too good to have contributed to any of these situations in any way. The story Nice People is about HIV and when the virus was first discovered, government officers, in a mistaken move to assure the public of their safety, rushed to compartmentalize citizens into the evil that were responsible for spreading the virus and the good that were out of harm's way.

**Question:** Is it your view therefore that these people, the so called nice, are causing more harm than good?

**Answer:** In more ways than you would imagine. First, there are holy people who are wont to embarrass anyone seeking medical attention for STDs. And then there are people who fear to buy condoms because it shows that they are going to engage in sex which is a sin and shame of shames, even media houses label an STD like Aids the scourge. To scourge is to punish and when a child is born with Aids, exactly what is he or she being punished for? Aids is a disease just like any other and anyone suffering from disease needs medication not condemnation.

**Question:** If I have got you right then your novel is a quest for openness concerning sexually transmitted infections and why did you write such a novel from a doctor's perspective?

**Answer:** My dream as a child was to become a doctor but the some conflicts with the biology teacher saw me take Geography instead. Becoming a doctor would have made me of great service to the community but since circumstances could not let that be the only way to atone for my failure to become a doctor was to write such a book.

**Question:** Do you feel that you have succeeded in your endeavor as a writer?

**Answer:** For now I have done what I could but Kenya is so far a hostile place for writers. But I hope that with the successive regime changes writers may soon have a freer environment to ply their trade.



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