

The Significance of Epic Features in Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *the Perfect Nine*

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the significance of the epic form in Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *The Perfect Nine* (2020), with the aim of examining how the author repositions the epic as a vessel of pre-capitalist wisdom. It argues that Ngũgĩ employs the form not only to re-institutionalize orality but also to address the crises confronting contemporary humanity. The study identifies the poetics of the African epic within *The Perfect Nine*, employing a qualitative research design grounded in library research and textual analysis. These methods support an inquiry into whether a societal realignment—attuned to the demands of nature—is necessary to mitigate ongoing human crises. The analysis is guided by Ngũgĩ's postcolonial philosophy of globalectics and Victor Shklovsky's formalist theory. *The Perfect Nine* was purposively selected for its postcolonial engagement and its emphasis on indigenous knowledge systems. The findings contribute to scholarship on Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's oeuvre and reinforce key aspects of his postcolonial thought. Ultimately, the study underscores the vital role of the past in shaping the present and its potential in addressing contemporary human challenges. This research will be of particular interest to students and scholars of postcolonial African literature and those engaged in broader postcolonial discourse.

Key words: Globalectic, pre-capitalist wisdom, postcolonial, orality, mitigate, African epic form.

INTRODUCTION

This paper explores the poetics of the African epic in Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *The Perfect Nine* (2020). It examines the globalectic features that define the text as part of the epic genre, with the aim of demonstrating how the author both draws upon and contributes to existing conventions. This analysis reveals how Ngũgĩ's work either conforms to or diverges from the core characteristics of the African epic, as discussed by various scholars.

According to Rutledge (2012), African epics have earned a place in the canon of global literature due to their compelling storytelling and the universal resonance of their themes. He specifically highlights the *Sundiata* and *Mwindo* epics. The *Sundiata Epic* claims its canonical status on the strength of its captivating narrative, humanistic aspirations, timeless vision, and universal message. It emphasizes a deterministic view of human life, in which individuals must follow a predestined path to fulfill their destinies. As Djeli Kouyate declares, "If it is foretold that your destiny should be fulfilled in such and such a land, men can do nothing about it" (Niane, 1965). Traits such as nobility of character, honesty, hard work, courage, moral integrity, and solidarity with one's kin are essential to success.

The *Sundiata Epic* straddles both history and literature, embodying the enduring tension between the two. As historical narrative, it venerates historically verifiable figures and their significant contributions to society, often grounded in real dates, places, and events. For example, historical evidence indicates that Sundiata lived from 1190 to 1255, returning from exile to establish a prosperous empire in Mali. As literature, however, the epic creatively reinterprets historical facts through artistic improvisation and imaginative embellishment by griots during performances. These include the use of formulaic structures that create a sense of urgency and repetition, as well as the deployment of figurative language rich in proverbs, aphorisms, witticisms, chants, and hyperbole.

Griots often incorporate autobiographical elements into their narratives, as Djeli Mamoudou Kouyate does in Niane's version by extolling his lineage of skilled royal griots (Niane, 1965).

Some scholars argue that African epics are primarily literary rather than historical. Hill et al. (1998) claim that "the genre of the oral epic should be regarded as literature rather than as history because griots' versions often differ markedly in detail." However, this argument is self-defeating; like literature, history is also subject to multiple interpretations and can be manipulated by political, cultural, or ideological influences. A more balanced perspective is that African epics inherently blend both historical and literary elements.

In *Sundiata*, the language of prophecy is highly figurative and ritualistic. When the soothsayer visits Nare Maghan, Sundiata's father, he uses metaphoric language to convey his message: "The silk cotton tree springs from a tiny seed—that which defies the tempest weighs in its germ no more than a grain of rice," and "Kingdoms are like trees; some will be silk-cotton trees, others will remain dwarf palms" (Niane, 1965). The silk-cotton tree metaphor represents both the Mali Empire and its future emperor (Tsaaior, 2013). Hyperbolic imagery is also used to dramatize Sundiata's final military campaign: "A shout of joy issuing from thousands of throats filled the whole heaven" (Niane, 1965).

Tension also exists between prose and poetry within epic narratives. Poetry is often viewed as more sophisticated and elevated, characterized by rhythmic language, proverbs, chants, symbolic names, and epithets. Prose, by contrast, is considered more straightforward and accessible. Nonetheless, both forms are mutually reinforcing. In the hands of a skilled griot, poetry and prose are seamlessly blended to enhance artistic expression. While Niane's version is written in lucid prose, other Mandinka versions, such as those by Innes and Johnson, are rendered in poetic form. Regardless of the style, all versions maintain the narrative core of Sundiata's journey.

As a work of epic scale, *Sundiata* holds a distinguished place in world literature. Okpewho (1992) asserts that it affirms the African origins of the epic form. The existence of an "African Epic Belt," spanning the Sahel to Central Africa, further disproves Finnegan's (1970) claim that "epic hardly seems to occur in sub-Saharan Africa." Chinweizu et al. (1980) extend this argument, claiming that the African novel evolved from oral epics and long-form narratives. Though their position may be seen as nativist or romanticized, it challenges Eurocentric assumptions and affirms Africa's rich literary heritage.

African epics differ from their Western counterparts in several ways. While all epics involve warfare and spiritual energy, African epics emphasize metaphysical and supernatural elements. Conflicts often pit positive (constitutional) forces against negative (unconstitutional) cosmic powers. In *Sundiata*, Sundiata battles Sumanguru, a sorcerer-king, using spiritual weapons such as fetishes, talismans, and amulets. Johnson (1986) refers to these confrontations as "battles of sorcery." Sundiata defeats Sumanguru's magical forces using a cockspur, dismantling his opponent's reliance on snakes, skulls, and other dark symbols.

In contrast, Western epics tend to valorize physical strength and martial prowess. While the supernatural is present, it is often secondary to human heroism. African epics, on the other hand, integrate the magical within indigenous cosmologies. This reliance on the mystical extends beyond literature to contemporary African cinema, such as Nigeria's Nollywood. Deme (2010) emphasizes that belief in the supernatural is a key feature of African epics, rooted in the cosmological systems of their originating societies.

Religion and spirituality also play a central role in *Sundiata*. Snodgrass (2010) observes that Islam's influence added a global dynamic to African epic traditions. Although Islam existed in Mali during Sundiata's reign, historical accounts suggest it had not yet fully taken root (Keim, 2000). Nevertheless, traces of Islamic influence appear in the text, such as when Sogolon Djata invokes Allah in gratitude when Sundiata begins to walk: "Oh day, what a beautiful day/Allah Almighty, you never created a finer day" (Niane, 1965).

Despite this, scholars generally agree that Sundiata adhered primarily to traditional African spirituality—a synthesis of animistic beliefs and magico-religious practices. The presence of witches, fetishes, and spiritual rituals throughout the epic confirms this view. Sundiata appears as a syncretic figure who embodies elements of both traditional and Islamic belief systems, symbolizing a cultural and religious bridge (Fage, 1977; Badru,

2006). Austen (2010) refers to this cultural blend as “Islamicate”—a fusion of Islamic and indigenous elements regardless of formal religious adherence.

As a performance text, *Sundiata* exists in intertextual dialogue with global literature. It shares structural and thematic similarities with biblical narratives. Sundiata’s life parallels those of Abraham, Moses, David, and Jesus. Like Abraham’s sons, Sundiata and his brother both claim succession, with the younger becoming the chosen heir. Like Moses, Sundiata is born into royalty, experiences hardship, goes into exile, and returns to liberate his people. His life journey resembles a *Bildungsroman*, marked by growth, adversity, and eventual triumph.

This liberationist ethos mirrors the David and Goliath motif, with Sundiata defeating the older, more experienced Sumanguru in a decisive battle. Ultimately, Sundiata frees Mali from tyranny and leaves a lasting legacy, just as biblical heroes do.

The *Sundiata Epic* is even believed to have inspired Disney’s *The Lion King*. Sundiata is metaphorically referred to as “the lion king” and described as *simbong* (the hunter’s whistle), the son of Sogolon Djata, and the hunter of lions. His narrative shares striking parallels with that of Simba—both are heirs to a throne, endure exile, and rely on the help of strangers before reclaiming their destinies. Sundiata’s exile in Mema foreshadows a key motif of global literature: the exilic consciousness.

The Lion King dramatizes the human condition through a popular, digital medium. It fuses African oral traditions with Western digital storytelling, demonstrating the hybrid nature of global literature. The dialogue between oral and digital forms erases binary oppositions such as traditional vs. modern, official vs. popular, and African vs. Western. As such, *The Lion King* exemplifies the commodification and global circulation of African oral traditions, reaffirming the literary sophistication of African cultures and their place in the global literary canon.

Research objective

To identify the poetics of the African epic present in Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong’o’s *The Perfect Nine* (2020).

METHODS

The researcher used descriptive survey research design through which the researcher obtained information from the close reading and analysis of the primary text. This research design describes the present status of people, attitudes and progress. This method allows the researcher to examine the relationship between the artists’ work of art and approaches used in discussing the epic. The research also used secondary sources to collect data thus this research has been library based. Data collected was organized in three stages namely, data pre-processing, development of a coding system and deciding on the storage media.

Data analysis

This study followed a qualitative content analysis procedure and data was collected by critically analysing the chosen text. As *The Perfect Nine* (2020) was the only primary source of this study, a collection of other secondary sources also formed up part of this study as they presented related themes to this research. The researcher opted for content analysis as the subject under study cannot be mathematically organised/quantified thus no statistical data presentation was given in this study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Invocation of a Muse as an Aesthetic of the African Epic

Many epics begin with an invocation to a muse or divine entity, seeking inspiration and guidance in telling the epic story. This serves as a traditional opening that connects the work to the epic tradition. Aristotle admonished the invocation of the muse in the epic. In *The Poet Appeals to His Muse: Homeric Invocations in the Context of Epic Performance*, (Minchin, 1995) explains that in Greek mythology, the nine muses were the goddesses of

various arts such as music, dance and poetry (pp.21). They primarily aided both the gods and humanity to excel and to forget their troubles. They enabled musicians and writers to attain greater creative and intellectual heights. The invocation begins the epic poems and acts as the prologue to the events to come. The poet begs for inspiration, knowledge or the opportunity to finish a poem worthy of its subject matter.

In *Theogony* (1987), Hesiod, for instance, claimed to have held a conversation with various muses who blessed him with a divine voice to transform a pure shepherd into a great poet at the pleasure of the gods. A reading of *Two Thousand Seasons* reveals that Armah repeatedly invokes the godhead in the text. In the first place, Anoa, we read, was “possessed by a spirit hating all servitude, so fierce in its hatred that it was known to cause those it possessed to strangle those- so many now-whose joy was to force the weaker into tools of their users,” (1973 pp. 14). That spirit had possessed Sekela, Azania and the other women who slew the predatory tormentors. When possessed, Anoa’s spirit uttered prophecies of fiery extinction, destruction and voracious conflagrations. It also spoke of saltwater washing thousands upon thousands of dead people. She cautioned the people against “the generosity of fools” and prophesied the following against them:

Slavery-do you know what that is? Ah, you will know. Two Thousand Seasons, a thousand going into it, a second thousand crawling maimed from it, will you everything about enslavement the destruction of souls, the killing of bodies, the infusion of violence into every breath, every drop, every morsel of your sustaining air, your water, your food. Till you come up again upon the way, (Armah, 1973 pp.17)

In both prophesies, the African belief system functions as the voice that predicts and instructs the group members on the direction of their lives. These voices and utterances, (Mtshali, 2009) believes, are entrenched deeply in African traditional religion. He thinks that when an emerging image has chosen its purpose in the traditional religion, an oracle or divine messenger announces this being’s destiny. That was the case in *Emperor Shaka* (1981) and *Sundiata* (1965). This is what is replicated in *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973) when it takes the priests and priestesses to announce the life purpose of the people of Anoa, the announcement of which was done in seven voices. The first three spoke of a “time impending, a time heavy with courage, fire and fire, blood hissing out of its life” (pp.12). The remaining four spoke of “fantastic journeys to overland, on long, incredible traversing of a place neither land nor water...” Mtshali also believed that the African belief system puts the priests and priestesses as agents or media through which communication with God almighty and humans is facilitated.

Homer’s invocation of the Muse is a key element in both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* serving as a plea for divine assistance in telling a story worthy of the subject matter. At the start of both epics, Homer addresses a muse, typically Calliope, asking for inspiration, memory and the ability to narrate the epic tale with skill and artistry. In *The Iliad*, Homer begins by saying:

“Sing, goddess, the anger of Peleus’ son Achilles,” (Line.1)

He is directly addressing a Muse which is often referred to as Calliope and requesting the ability to recount the wrath of Achilles.

In the *Odyssey*, the invocation is similar, with Homer asking the Muse to:

“Sing to me of the man of twists and turns...” (Book 1, pp.1-3)

Here, he is asking for the Muse’s guidance in telling the story of Odysseus’s long and arduous journey home. The Muse is also asking Homer to remember the details of Odysseus’s travels and the trials he faced. The invocation highlights the epic scope and the divine inspiration behind the poem.

From the above argument, it is evident that the invocation of the muse is a traditional element of the epic poetry marking the beginning of the story and setting the tone. It also acknowledges the divine source of the tale and establishes the epics’ grand scale. The invocation also serves as a prayer for the ability to craft a compelling and memorable narrative.

Just like Homer’s invocation of the muse, Ngũgĩ in *The Perfect Nine* (2020) uses the muse in a broader sense. This is the inspiration and source of creativity and beauty that Ngũgĩ draws upon to creation of the epic poem.

The story of the perfect nine, while based on the oral tradition and myths of the Gikuyu people, is presented as a revelation, a vision that inspires Ngũgĩ to write and share the story of Gikuyu and Mumbi and their ten daughters. The perfect nine (nine daughters) is also considered a muse, representing the potential for beauty, strength and wisdom that Ngugi explores. Ngũgĩ uses the narrative structure of a traditional epic poem which often includes an invocation to a muse-like figure for inspiration. This structure and the poem's subject matter which is the retelling of the Gikuyu creation myth, suggest an invocation of the power of myth and story as a source of inspiration and understanding derived from the Giver Supreme:

We receive this with all our hearts, O Giver Supreme," they set in unison. Thank you Owner of the Ostrich Whiteness, for this land, which you have given us, our children and our children's children. (pp.7)

As an inspiration from the muse, Ngũgĩ recounts of receiving a deep revelation whose feeling and sense serves as a base upon which the source of beauty is anchored:

I use the quest for the beautiful, as an ideal of living, as the motif force behind migrations of African peoples. The epic came to me one night as a revelation of ideals of quest, courage, perseverance, unity, family and the sense of the divine, in human struggles with nature and nurture"(Wa Thiong'o, 2020 pp.x)

This suggests that the story in *The Perfect Nine* was not just a mere narration but a deeply inspired creation. Such declarations by Ngugi and especially as a verse narrative form is a clear reflection of the author's engagement with the creative muse.

The daughters of Gikuyu and Mumbi are described as beautiful and for this reason seen as a source of admiration attracting many suitors from diverse backgrounds:

Young men lost sleep in dreams of the beautiful ones, and each would secretly leave in pursuit of the image in his dreams, each following whatever river he first came across. (pp.37)

This beauty and attraction in a deep sense makes them a source of unity, strength and love. The suitors together with the perfect nine journeyed amid challenges and trials in the land of Gikuyu people. Their ability to choose their own paths, their resilience in the face of adversity and their unity of purpose attests to the inner beauty which is perceived to be a source of strength, the female assertiveness, the spirit to overcome which Ngũgĩ celebrates by empowering the female spirit.

The myth as portrayed by Ngugi is seen as a source of wisdom and cultural understanding. This makes the story in *The Perfect Nine* a cosmogenic myth of the Gikuyu people providing a framework for understanding their origin, values and traditions. Ngũgĩ, by retelling this myth not only discusses a cultural heritage but also serves as a modern interpretation of the myth's significance. By so doing, Ngũgĩ explores themes of family, community and the human experience from a multi-angled perspective. He offers a deep understanding of the Gikuyu peoples' worldview and the place they hold in the world space.

As evident in *The Perfect Nine*, Ngugi's use of muse serves as a guiding force, a source of inspiration that drives him to write and a means of exploring and preserving the rich cultural heritage of the Gikuyu people. The Muse is not just an external entity but an embodiment of the collective memory, traditions and values of the Gikuyu community. Through the muse, Ngũgĩ re-imagines the Gikuyu creation myth, infusing it with contemporary themes and narratives while simultaneously honouring the oral tradition from which it originates.

Journey or Quest Motif as an Aesthetic of the African Epic

The beginning of human journeys is traced in Adamic days when Adam and Eve departed the paradise in anguish and despair (Jive, 2011): "Ever since mankind has been making short and long journeys for various reasons" (pp.1). Journeys have been a means for seeking knowledge, wealth or adventures; and they have resulted in discoveries and advancements. That is why (Abbeele, 1991) considers a journey to presuppose a movement away from home or complacency for the individual; and a movement of human beings from one place of significance along several dimensions of experience to another.

Since the beginning of literary criticism, the journey motif has been a central point of interest for many scholars. Through the millennia of written story-telling, the epic narratives of great voyage have been studied as tales of discovery that hold a central position in a variety of cultural traditions, allowing readers to move with heroic characters travelling to far places and making discoveries. The journey motif claims (Garry, 2005), is a recurrent traditional narrative unit in folklore that has gained a significant position in prose fiction. Arguing along the same line, (Mung'aya, 2018) observes:

Since there is a dialectical relationship between literature and society, the journey in the text has influenced writers in their narratives to enter social-cultural and political spaces. In this way, writers use this allegory of journey in creating characters that move in space in order to interrogate the dynamics of human conditions... (pp.2)

Mortimer (1991) observes that journey motif is rooted in Africa's oral narrative but it is also central to the European novel. Jive (2011) stresses that a journey may be a voyage in the physical sense or in figurative terms. That is, a character may be involved either in physical movement from one place to another or there could be mental and spiritual voyages of characters transpiring metaphorically: "physical journey can also be used as a symbol of metaphorical journeys in characters' lives" (pp.21). The journey motif is therefore a key feature of the epic poetry which can be used to advance plot, character and exploring values in the society. This journey can be external in a literal sense or symbolic in a literary perspective reflecting on the heroes' physical and psychological advancements and transformations.

Proponents of the epic journey often employ the physical and spiritual approaches within the hero. The *Odyssey*, for instance, can be seen as a Homeric metaphor reflecting on the uncertainties in the course of journeying for life. The *Iliad* focuses on war while addressing fate, honour and leadership within the Greek societal and cultural contexts. The journey may not just be seen as a means of moving from one place to another but rather overcoming new obstacles, introducing new challenges, conflicts and more settings within one or varied contexts.

Just like Homer's set journey in the *Odyssey* and *The Iliad*, Ngũgĩ in *The Perfect Nine* (2020), applies the journey motif which exposes and brings about the heroic adventure of the females in their face of adversity. He re-imagines the Gikuyu creation myth, incorporating elements of the epic journey to explore themes of female empowerment, cultural identity and the pursuit of knowledge. The journey takes centre stage as suitors seek the hands of Gikuyu and Mumbi's daughters, each facing trials and tribulations that test their worthiness. Gĩkũyũ and Mũmbi want the groups to embark on a journey to the mountain of the moon, to walk the path they had walked and drink the water they had drunk. The daughters and their respective groups are given a mission: to find Mwengeca, the king of human-eating ogres, who is said to have hair that grows in the very middle of his tongue. Gĩkũyũ tells them the following words:

I will give you one more mission...

We went to the holy shrine around the fig tree to sacrifice and ask for a cure.

I was told the cure lies with Mwengeca the King of human-eating ogres...

The hair grows in the middle of his tongue.

I have looked for him but have encountered only his shadow.

I want you to wrestle him to the ground, capture his tongue, and pull out the hair.

The hair that cures all will restore full power to Warigia's legs. (Wa Thiong'o, 2020 pp.90).

The journey to the mountain of the moon sees the ninety-nine leaving home as "an immature lot," and after a period spanning an untold number of weeks or seasons, those who have made their way back home are "a mature lot," only nineteen in number (pp.171). The ninety-nine have to face a plethora of challenges along the path to the mountain of the moon, from the minor irritation of mosquitoes, red ants, and tsetse flies, to crocodiles and other humans, who pose the greatest danger of all with their machetes, spears, clubs, and arrows. Most aspirants

are eliminated by these dangerous ogres that represent human frailties and shortcomings that are either not good enough or perhaps that the perfect nine reject, (Adiguzel, 2025). This is an epic journey taken as a test. The suitor's migrations across the continent to win the daughters' hands in marriage is a central element of the epic journey. These journeys are not mere geographical movements; they are a symbolic representation of the suitor's struggle to prove their worthiness through the challenges like encountering crocodiles, snakes and ogres as well as facing hunger and despair, (Waita, 2020).

Through the epic journey, Ngũgĩ brings out the daughters of Gikuyu and Mumbi as active agents. The author retells the traditional epic where the perfect ten are not passive recipients of the suitor's quests but active participants and judges. They are depicted as fearless, wise, and independent, making their own decisions about the partners. While embarking on the journey toward the mountain of the moon, they stayed together, young blood and their hearts beating with hope, hoping that maybe one day they would unite, because all people, born of humans who know themselves as human off springs, are their siblings, members of the human clan (pp.61). This understanding brought the females to a journey of unity, embracing humanity in readiness to undertake an expedition with the suitors despite having been born only females. They understood that the thing in humans is the thing in all things, the thing in human is the thing in place, the thing in time: the thing in itself.

The journey was an exposure to resilience, struggles, the need for unity and coexisting, hard work and struggle and desire to overcome. They had to overcome creatures bigger than they ever imagined instilling a different world view and opinion. "A human is human because of other humans. All people are people because of other people" (pp.67). They embraced the need to work together since people make the world, not just the soil. This epic journey is infused with feminist perspective highlighting the strength and agency of the female characters. Ngugi's epic narration includes a tenth daughter, Warigia, who is crippled but is still skilled at hunting, further emphasizing on inclusivity.

Consequently, the journey of the perfect nine not only preserves the Gikuyu cultural traditions and origin myth but also offers a modern interpretation of the epic genre. The author's use of the epic form allows him to explore themes of creation, family and the pursuit of a better future. In addition, the suitors' journey also represents a quest for knowledge and understanding as they must learn from their experiences and overcome obstacles to prove their value. This quest is intertwined with the daughters' own journey of self-discovery and finding their place in the world.

The journey is a collective and individual challenge for endurance, courage and a test of inner strength for social survival. It represents the struggles of life, becoming a journey of self-awareness and self-awakening for those who will form the Kikuyu nation. Ten of the suitors and all the nine daughters make it, bring back their gourds of the water from the 'pool of God' and the melted ice from the top of Mount Kirinyaga to be born again into the future Kikuyu clans consisting of the perfect nine.

Adventures and Battles as an Aesthetic of the African Epic

Epic poems frequently include large-scale battles or conflicts that have far-reaching consequences. These battles showcase the hero's prowess and courage, as well as the clash between opposing forces. This is the universal experience of the human being on his journey through life. It is due to adversity that the hero is able to confront and understand his own limits, overcome them and acquire a new awareness, of himself and everything around him; ultimately "what all the myths have to deal with is transformation of consciousness of one kind or another" (Campbell, 2012).

The exploits of the hero begin with the call to adventure, followed by phases that are paradigmatic of all heroic tales. When the adventure begins, the valiant hero abandons his everyday existence in favour of discovering a different world, in which he undertakes battles and overcomes obstacles, so he can then go back to his ordinary life. He returns once he has acquired a new awareness and, consequently, undergone a personal transformation. His conquests are then shared with his community, with which he reconnects; thus the hero is able to make a new beginning, for him and for others.

In *The Perfect Nine* (2020), the narrative revolves around the nine beautiful daughters of Gikuyu and Mumbi and their journey to find partners which include a perilous expedition filled with battles against ogres and various trials. The narrative blends folklore, mythology and adventure highlighting the strength and resilience of the daughters as they navigate challenges and ultimately choose their path.

The group has to face a number of challenges along the path to the mountain of the moon from minor irritation of mosquitoes to crocodiles and other humans who pose the greatest danger of all with their machetes, spears and arrows. Climbing the mountain and withstanding the cold is yet another challenge, but they remain hopeful throughout their endeavour for “there is no power stronger than the power of hope” (pp.109). This journey up Mount Kenya presents further challenges testing the endurance and perseverance of the daughters and their suitors.

The group encounter a bodiless Ogre with a magical tongue who faces off against Wanjiru and her own strong, arrogant and defiant tongue (pp.117). When his long, wide tongue wraps itself around the tree, Wanjiru shouts to alert the others to act and arrows pin the ogre’s tongue to the tree. The daughters pierce his eyes and pluck his magical hair but do not hurt his body as they cannot see it. It is Kihara that jumps on his magical tongue and pulls out the hair, prompting Mwengeca to “let out a blood-curdling scream” (pp.118). Kihara has indeed done this for Warigia. This is confirmed later in the text that this pulling out of the hair in the middle of Mwengeca’s tongue is the one that restores the use of the beautiful legs of the last born Warigia who had stayed home from the journey. The daughter’s quest for a cure for their paralysed sister Warigia leads them on a perilous expedition that requires of them to overcome obstacles and tests of strength and character.

Another battle that the group faces is an encounter with a creature with three legs and three arms who breathes smoke and fire from his mouths and nose incinerating all the plants around him (pp.132). Mwithaga is asked as the price for letting them go, but instead, she suggests that her sisters climb a fig tree, a mythical tree in Gikuyu culture and also assuming a position where the flames cannot reach her. Mwithaga starts to mock the creature by singing a rain song, she then chants incantations to induce rain and it starts raining. Ngũgĩ’s epic describes the beautiful scene of “leaves amplifying the sound of rain” this sound is rendered as cococococo, with the entire verse reading as follows:

Rain rain down

I will give you

The ugly one

With three legs

And three arms

Dry like stones.

It can’t run.

It can’t lift

It can’t drink

Rain pours down. (Wa Thiong’o, 2020 pp.134)

This facing of ogres along their journey represents various challenges and trials. These battles test their courage and quick thinking.

This powerful evocative sound combined with the rain makes the Ogre of Fire and Fury to run away. Sadly, this also cost the group with some losses. While the nine manage to run at a fair pace, some of the men are not able

to run as swiftly, and hence die when the flames reach them. Their mourning reaches its apex in the line “our pain was deepened by our knowing that we could not stop to help them (pp.133).

In the groups’ encounter with these Ogres, they defeat them using the opposing forces that shape and support mankind, demonstrating that individuals will ultimately overcome their difficulties if they exhibit tenacity and creative responses to harmful pressures. The Gikuyu country has been significantly shaped by these adventures and conflicts. Clans are formed and customs and values are established as a result of the voyage and the difficulties that the daughters and suitors encounter.

Cultural Hero Figure as an Aesthetic of the African epic

The epic hero is central to many epics. This is a figure that embodies the values and ideals of the culture or society from which the story originates. This hero is typically larger-than-life, with extraordinary traits like strength, wisdom, or leadership (Arnott, 2016). The hero embarks on a journey, confronting significant challenges and accomplishing remarkable feats that symbolize the collective identity of the community. From ancient oral traditions to modern retellings, epic heroes reflect evolving societal norms, (Mwai et al, 2015). We are expected to admire and no doubt emulate the courage with which the hero faces the most extraordinary challenges; but it is clear that he is equipped for the confrontation with resources that ordinary men do not usually possess. And right from the beginning to the consummation of his career he is shown in a light that places him above the level not only of natural men but indeed of the other figures in his extraordinary world; there is usually an extra resource that ensures he will always triumph either physically or spiritually.

The *Sundiata epic* represents a communal narrative event and cultural charter in the Senegambia region of West Africa. It celebrates the chivalric personality and monumental achievements of Sundiata Keita, the emperor of the Mali Empire in the 13th century. In Western Sudan, Ghana was the first empire; Mali the second, and Songhai was third. Sundiata presided over Mali from the year 1235 to 1255 and took the royal title Emperor or King. At the time of his death, he had consolidated the formidable military forces of twelve states and extended the territorial fortunes of the empire from the west of the Niger River to the Atlantic Ocean with Niani as the capital, (Snodgrass, 2010).

Sundiata was not only a warrior-prince but also an embodiment of Mali’s cultural grammar of values and mores. He was the towering figure who gave the empire its social customs, political institutions, economic prosperity and military tradition. As (Asante and Mazama, 2005) observes:

It was during his reign that Mali first began to gain fame and notoriety as well as economic strength, a strength that his successors such as Mansa Musa improved on thanks to the ground work set by Sundiata, who controlled the region’s trade routes and gold fields. The social and political constitution of Mali was first codified during the reign of Mansa Sundiata Keita, (Asante, 2005).

This perspective is also affirmed by Innes when he states that Sundiata occupies “a special place in the hearts of the of the Mandinka and of all Manding people” and that he is “a cultural hero...who established the network of social relationships found in Mandinka society, and who established the norms of social behaviour...who gave them their glorious past and their social institutions” (Innes, 1990 pp. 101-102).

Sundiata epic is therefore a befitting testament to the rich and enduring legacies that he bequeathed to old Mali. The epic no doubt historicizes Sundiata’s dominant place or role and contextualizes it within an imperial dynamic. But it also narrativizes modernity in that the modern West African nation-states which have become heirs to old Mali are an intimate part of the present planetary consciousness and global system. By extension, the epic itself participates in global sociocultural, economic, and political engineering as a textual body that negotiates the human condition. The epic is, therefore, an intertextual conversation with other epics of the world in so far as its literary endowments and social referents engage local and global human challenges which are definitive of modernity/globalization.

In a similar perspective, Ngũgĩ in *The Perfect Nine* (2020), re-imagines the Gikuyu origin story, shifting the focus from the traditional male heroes to the ten daughters of Gikuyu and Mumbi. These daughters, “the perfect

“nine” becomes the epic’s true heroes, embodying strength, wisdom and independence as they navigate trials and tribulations to choose their own partners from among the ninety-nine suitors. Ngũgĩ’s retelling of the narrative challenges traditional gender roles and offers a feminist perspective on African storytelling, highlighting the role of women in shaping their own destinies. The re-imagining of the Gikuyu epic deviates from the traditional norm of the epic tradition which centres on Gikuyu and Mumbi and their quest to find partners for their daughters. Instead, the focus shifts to the daughters themselves who become the central figures in the epic journey.

Consequently, Warigia’s unique role in the epic is brought out. She is the last born of Gikuyu and Mumbi, the tenth daughter, but always muted as the “full nine.” Tradition has it that she got pregnant outside wedlock and never got married. She became the progenitor of the tenth clan. Just like Sundiata in the *Epic of Old Mali*, she is unable to walk in childhood. Her infirmity is one of the key conflicts that motivate action in this epic. One of the key mission and test of the suitors in the journey retracing the footsteps of the Gikuyu and Mumbi is to bring back the only medicine that can cure her lameness. It is only after the healing strand of hair is cut off and procured from the tongue of the Ogre Mwengeca that she instantaneously heals and is able to walk. The crippled daughter of Gikuyu and Mumbi is a symbol of resilience and strength despite her physical limitation. She joins her sisters on their journey demonstrating that even with her infirmity; she can be an important part of the epic’s narrative, (Waita, 2020).

In her previous infirmity, Warigia had mastered the skill of archery. She invites herself into the competition mounted by her parents for the daughters and the suitors and emerges the overall winner. She is decisive in that while her sisters are fighting over the ninety nine men, she has already chosen her partner. When her partner, Kihara, the one that cut the healing hair refuses to live in Gikuyu and Mumbi’s compound and opts to go back home, she follows him against her father’s verdict. But as fate would have it, a lion attacks before they reach Kihara’s home. The lion fatally wounds him, he advises her to return home as he dies. She hunts down the lion and returns home pregnant with Kihara’s child to join the others in the final rituals to constitute the perfect nine, (Waita, 2020).

Ngugi’s retelling of the myth is characterised by a strong feminist perspective where the daughters are portrayed as independent, courageous and wise. They actively choose their partners rather than being passively chosen and lead the quest to find a cure for their paralysed sister Warigia. The perfect nine are not simply passive recipients of attention; they are active agents in their own lives and the lives of their suitors. They face dangers, make choices and lead the journey to find their husbands.

Ngũgĩ subverts traditional epic conventions by making the women the central figures and challenging the dominance of male-centric epics. He also incorporates elements of allegory and adventure, creating a vibrant and engaging narrative. By retelling the Gikuyu origin story in a new way, Ngũgĩ celebrates the rich traditions of African storytelling while also pushing the boundaries of the genre. His work is a testament to the power of storytelling to shape and reflect on cultural values. Ngũgĩ’s epic emphasizes on female empowerment and challenges traditional gender roles by presenting nine daughters of Gikuyu and Mumbi as the primary heroes and matriarchs of the Gikuyu community. They are portrayed as self sufficient, skilled and capable of leading their own lives and contributing to the growth of their clans. This depiction subverts the common narrative of men as the primary heroes in many stories, especially those rooted in African folklore and mythology.

Didacticism as an Aesthetic of the African Epic

Johnson et al. (1997) asserts that African oral epics serve as educational resources that provide textual evidence for the increasing public appreciation of African epic poetry and its heroes. One may learn a lot about individuals and the world around them from heroic stories. Epics are excellent educators. One could discover the ways in which their ancestors aid the younger generations. Other significant values that may be learned from epic stories include the importance of fighting for justice, one’s rights, and bravery.

People can learn how to act in difficult situations of hardship by reading the epics of *Shaka* and *Sundiata*. This is reflected in both epics. Another aspect of epics that relates to their historical role is their traditional organization. Stated differently, the epics of *Shaka* and *Sundiata* serve as a blueprint for how society should approach a variety of problems. Since (Kunene, 1979) asserts that a follower must perform on par with his master

and that the rulers are the springs from which a country drinks, one may learn how a good leader should be exemplary and how the load of a ruler never stops (pp. 40).

Additionally, the epic of Sundiata teaches us about justice and effective leadership. No one was spared by Djata's justice, according to (Niane, 1965). He acted according to God's word. Because he shielded the vulnerable against the powerful, people would travel for days to demand justice from him. The good guy received rewards and the bad man received punishments under his sun (pp.81).

Both Kunene's Shaka and Niane's Sundiata are didactic in that they could impart lessons about transformation to society. Both have the power to inspire others to perform good things. According to (Kunene, 1979), "power of command can only be attained by courage, and no individual shall profit from the heroism of others." When he states that "to die running from adversaries is a scourge every hero fears," the same author exhorts readers to battle their adversary. Sundiata set a positive example that is still applicable to Mandingo people and others, as Niane claims that "Sundiata left his stamp on Mali for all time and his taboos are still directing men in their conduct."

Ngũgĩ offers an insight on the value of self-discovery, making well-informed decisions and the resilience of feminine strength in the face of hardship in his (2020) book *The Perfect Nine*. The epic, which is based on the Gikuyu creation story, examines how the daughters of Gikuyu and Mumbi end up choosing their own paths and creating their own destiny in spite of many obstacles.

When the ninety-nine decide to fight among themselves to get the last nine suitors to wed the nine daughters, swords are drawn and rivals challenged among the ninety-nine, each of whom begins to claim that his own home region is superior to the others (pp. 57). This plan is not taken well by the family of Mumbi and Gikuyu. This is because they do not want any blood to be spilled over their daughters because as Gikuyu adds:

War destroys lives whereas peace restores, the warrior and the warrior bring home trophies of tears. The peacemaker and peacemaker bring home trophies of laughter. (pp. 60)

In the same vent, Mumbi and Gikuyu summons the ninety-nine and others and instils in them the virtue of embracing friendship, to embrace the human within us since the human is like the divine, it has many names but its real name is Human. They also invite the warring men to build their dwellings:

Come, let us embrace in friendship, come, and let us drink together in friendship. Come let us share a meal together. Come one, come all. Let us help one another. Every human is human because of other humans. (pp. 61)

Further, a dispute that arise among the daughters when they find themselves with one particular man as their first choice. Mumbi reproaches them by calling them aside and reminds them that:

When the heart finds its target, the head will decide. Never fight over a man. (pp. 78).

The above indicates that *The Perfect Nine* transcends cultural boundaries exploring universal themes of love, life and the cyclical nature of life and death. By drawing on the Gikuyu myth, Ngũgĩ connects his people's history to a broader Africa and universal narrative emphasizing the shared experiences of humanity.

Several tests are also given to the each group of ten chaperoned by one of the nine daughters where they learn how to make clothes, climbing of trees, starting a fire by drilling into hard stones or sticks, and throwing of spears. The last day is a test of archery skills during which Gikuyu wants the men to show his daughters how good they are at shooting arrows straight into the eye of a tree. All the groups succeed but once the shooting distance is increased, it is hardly possible to see. Funny enough, it is Warigia the only one who manages to shoot one arrow after another and each arrow hit the eye of the tree. The men wonder how she could do this on crippled legs. The lesson is that the journey of the perfect nine is a learning process. The epic emphasizes that life journey is not a shortcut to knowledge but a continuous learning process that requires patience, perseverance and the willingness to embrace challenges. The daughters' journey, fraught with peril and temptation, ultimately leads to wisdom and self-reliance.

Another issue that is reflected in *The Perfect Nine* (2020) is how one should act when faced with difficult circumstances. Wangari, the leopard, is not frightened of this "Great Darkness" until the gang encounters the Ogre of Darkness that never ends. She declares that her eyes are leopard-like and that they can see through darkness like the sun in the daytime or the full moon at night (pp.80). She quickly wards off the ogre of darkness by lighting a torch with the flint stones in her purse. The rest follow suit, chasing the monster away with blazing torches. Since this same monster has slain three of their friends, they mournfully rejoice during the day. Similar to this, Wairimu is astute while facing The Ogre of Spitting Fire and notes that although the ogre has eyes on both the front and rear of his head, he lacks the ability to see in three dimensions. Thus, she scales a tree and launches an aerial strike, causing the ogre to scurry in agony.

The experiences and travels of the hero might provide valuable perspectives on the human condition. Ngũgĩ presents a myth that symbolizes the struggles and the battle against opposing forces to the development of a country through the voyage by the ninety-nine, which entails retracing the steps of Gikuyu and Mumbi. As the eternal and immortal benefactor of the Gikuyu country, he believes that in order to be a part of this nation, both the individual and the collective must establish a connection with the God of Kirinyaga. Facing Mount Kirinyaga while praying and pleading is how this connection is made. Furthermore, Gikuyu elders must climb the mountainside into the mountain forest amid dire circumstances in order to offer the lamb and goat without blemish to the Kirinyaga God to demonstrate a full connection with God. Furthermore, it is thought that in order to regain his relationship with God and acquire the knowledge and fortitude necessary to overcome the colonialist, the Mau Mau hero Dedan Kimathi had to climb the mountain again. By going back these stages, Kimathi hoped to restore a country that colonization had damaged. In order to achieve unification and, as a result, provide continuity of the country, represented by the permanence of Mount Kirinyaga, those who wish to marry the daughters of Gikuyu and Mumbi must go back to the centre of the Kikuyu universe (Ogunde, 1999, Waita, 2020).

Indigenous Knowledge as an Aesthetic of the African Epic

The term Indigenous has often been associated in the Western context with the primitive, the wild, and the natural. However, for millions of Indigenous people all over the world, it is "an everyday rationalization that rewards individuals who live in a given locality". Warren (1995) defines it as the local knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society and acquired by local people through accumulation of experiences, informal experiences and intimate consciousness of the surroundings in a given culture. This definition highlights the fact that indigenous knowledge accumulates over time due to a community's interaction with its environment.

Ngũgĩ in *The Perfect Nine* (2020) draws upon and re-interprets the Gikuyu creation myth and indigenous knowledge to tell Gikuyu's narrative, and Mumbi's ten daughters. The epic preserves Gikuyu cultural traditions including wedding ceremonies and explore themes of beauty, courage and filial piety. By blending myth with modern narratives and incorporating elements like pursuit of beauty and the power of the Giver Supreme, Ngũgĩ creates a dynamic work that reflects Gikuyu history and cultural values.

The nine perfect brings about a historical cultural context among the Gikuyu people, offering a feminist perspective by exploring the powers and capabilities of the nine daughters while at the same time glorifying the Gikuyu culture by exploring their connection to their land, creator, its beauty, the wisdom, beliefs, cultural practices and customs. The knowledge of the Gikuyu people has been brought out in a solemn tone just like in *The Iliad*, the *Odyssey* or even the older Gilgamesh Epic. From his prologue, Ngũgĩ says:

I will tell the tale between Mumbi and Gikuyu

Then their daughters, The Perfect nine,

Matriarchs of the house of Mumbi,

Founders of their nine clans

Progenitors of the nation.

I will tell of their travels, and

The countless hardships they met on the way, (Wa Thiong'o, 2020 pp.3)

Ngũgĩ offers more of traditional African aesthetics in this mythical story of *The Perfect Nine*. He appeals to this aesthetic when he refers to higher powers of divine significance, the Giver Supreme (pp.15). His is a beautiful epic of African origin built on the patriarchy of Gikuyu and the matriarchy of Mumbi. He talks about recreation of a society where occupants struggle and successfully destabilize the riddle of colonial ogres, economic exploitation and oppression.

Ngũgĩ introduces a feminist perspective in the myth. Whereas females are considered to be typically weak, Warigia makes perfect the nine because even in her infirmity, she makes to emerge victorious. This shows that the feminine apparent weakness can be deceptive. This challenges the traditional notion where power structures are torn on patriarchal lines and order. The strength Ngũgĩ embodies in feminism challenges traditional power while putting in place the bridges of inclusivity and diversity.

Ngũgĩ challenges the predominance of the traditional kind of myth, offering a different perspective of storytelling as a successful African epic writer. By so doing, he enriches storytelling with societal values of family, nature, nurture, connecting people to the Supreme Giver, land and one another. Gikuyu and Mumbi as seen to be in constant discussion and talks with the nine daughters and suitors, evidence that this knowledge is passed down orally thereby empowering storytelling as a predominant culture of the Gikuyu people.

Ngũgĩ draws directly from the Gikuyu creation myth which offers a versed knowledge in the origin, creation, people, their land, homeland, beliefs, culture and customs. Their struggles and achievements are seen in the mission that calls for an expedition that the nine daughters together with their suitors embark on. Warigia is not left out despite being crippled for she is skilled at hunting and enriches the myth with feminist wisdoms and ideals.

Ngũgĩ therefore offers a blank verse account of the origin myth of Gikuyu people where he integrates myth, folklore, allegory and adventure on reflecting the cultural spectrums and retelling the myth of the Gikuyu people.

Cultural Significance as an Aesthetic of the African Epic

Epics often reflect and embody the values, beliefs, and cultural identity of the society from which they originate. They may serve as a means of preserving cultural heritage and conveying moral or ethical lessons. According to (Johnson, 1997), African heroic epics are among the most thorough examinations of African traditions and ideals and are focused on social and cultural roles. In addition to reflecting the diversity and complexity of African civilizations, these stories offer deep insight into their moral frameworks. Epics, as defined by (Rummell, 2002) are "cultural monuments" that commemorate and maintain cultural values and traditions. She continues by saying that the epics remind the audience of the importance of their culture, which helps to bring people together.

The beliefs of African people was rooted in their spirituality as a springboard to everything that they did. African people's spirituality was nourished through their everyday practice and in particular the evocation of the Creator's name, (Wane et al, 2007). For instance, Wane recalls while growing up in a rural area, her mother used to call on the name of the Creator, Mwene Nyaga, at dawn and later in the evening as the last frames burnt out and everyone was in their beds ready to sleep. According to Wane, the morning evocation was to give thanks to the Creator for having protected the family throughout the night and for having given every member of the family another day to witness the wonders of the world. In the evening, Wane states, her mother would give thanks for the day's blessings. The chance to witness spiritual rituals is a unique phenomenon found throughout African ancient societies.

Ngũgĩ celebrates Gikuyu people's origin while emphasizing on family, community and resilience as a means to shape culture and identity. He chooses the Homeric verse that allows for inclusivity and authenticity of the African approach to myth. Through the journey of the suitors and the daughters, he brings about identity, self discovery and communal contextualization amidst struggle for power survival in nature and against the powers of nature and a deep connection to ones land, divinities and human experiences. Ngũgĩ observes that beauty is a

celebrated culture which embodies human bravery showcased by the females and the finding of favour before divine benefactors or muses. He borrows from the mythology of Gikuyu and Mumbi who are the fore bearers of the Gikuyu community. The Giver Supreme is a unifying being, a being and nonbeing of distance and nearness, creator of the Moon White, sand, soil, wind and water who grants Gikuyu and Mumbi the perfect nine and a tenth daughter with disability who comes of age and triumphant.

Ngũgĩ paints a Gikuyu community's cultural context that blends folklore, mythology, journey and images from the historical background. He presents daughters as resilient and self sufficient humans who build their huts, prepare their land, fight their battles and unite amid the face of adversity. In the Gikuyu culture as brought out by Ngũgĩ, people are cautioned against strangers, evil creatures like ogres and discord.

Prayers are said to appease God as they scooped the Moon white in their hands, scatter it on the earth around them and say a peaceful glory to the Giver Supreme:

And now all the beauty they had left behind

Has reappeared tenfold for them to reap

More gratitude to the Giver Supreme welled up inside,

And they broke into hymns of praise, (Wa Thiong'o, 2020 pp.8).

They chanted gratitude to the Giver Supreme for bringing them to Mukurweini. They also believed in and saw God manifest in the trinity of Osiris, Isis and Horus. That is, God is Life, God is one, and Life is one. (pp.17)

Ngũgĩ uses the pronouns "He, She, and It" to refer to God, who is perceived as the intrinsic nature of his creations rather than being distinct from them. He demonstrates an exceptionally inclusive and accepting attitude by encompassing the concept of God from various religions and cultures under the term "Giver Supreme." When discussing God, he underlines that the corresponding figure in all religions represents the identical concept:

In some parts of Africa, they call it Mulungu, but it is the same Giver [...]

Mohammedans call Him Allah, and he is the same Giver [...]

God has many names, and they all point to the Giver Supreme. (p. 15)

The idea of Oneness, as a fundamental conception and reality of the universe in Hinduism, Buddhism, and many other beliefs, is placed at the centre of the epic:

"God is Life. God is One. Life is One" (pp.17).

The focus on the oneness of existence highlights the interdependence of all life forms and questions the dualistic views that frequently influence human thinking. It encourages readers to rethink the distinctions between the self, others, and the divine. In view of this, *The Perfect Nine* (2020), with its profound comprehension, transcends being only a narrative of extraordinary battles against giants, as it encompasses the ideals of affection, empathy, cooperation, and reverence for nature, to which all paths converge. The text possesses profound wisdom that can be seen as a guidebook, a framework, or even a holy scripture bestowed upon humanity to achieve a sustainable and habitable world.

Ngũgĩ's epic serves as a catalyst for reviving humanity's waning optimism amidst the pervasive influence of corrupt materialism. The author presents a fusion of remnants of the spirituality observed in indigenous African communities with insights from many religious systems. The striking resemblance between the messages conveyed and the understated manner in which they are presented in *Wizard of the Crow* (2006) is rather astounding: "All life is one and it flows like a river or the waters of the sea. Plants, humans, animals down to the creatures that crawl, all draw their share from the one indivisible river of life, just as they all draw breath from the air" (Wa Thiong'o, 2006 pp.3).

In this vein, Ngũgĩ rejects the principles upon which colonial powers and totalitarian regimes were established, aligning himself with the post colonial ideology. This statement is in line with the perspective of British cultural theorist Couze Venn, who argues that modernity sprang from colonialism and that post colonialism necessitates the rejection of all types of exploitation associated with colonialism, such as capitalism, patriarchy, and racism, (Venn, 2002).

African spirituality is therefore a way of life. It is not a thing of the weekend or an “out of work and school” event. The concepts of secular education and secular government are alien to the traditional African beliefs and practices. Africa cannot continue receiving a baggage of philosophy, as is true with financial aid. The African spirituality, which is holistic, optimistic, and life-affirming, as (Mbiti, 1988) affirms, must be lived through our art, science, and so on, in order to thrive. Our happiness, peace, sustainable environment, and development are so much dependent on the extent we know and understand ourselves. The prescriptions for every ill affecting Africa need to come out of Africa. Maybe it is time that Africa leads the way to the future.

CONCLUSION

In summary, this paper has identified globalectic aesthetics of the African epic in *The Perfect Nine* (2020). Although these aesthetics are not exhaustive or universally applicable to every epic, they may provide a framework for understanding the overarching features that define this literary genre. Ngũgĩ has drawn upon the structure and poetic style of Homeric verse to tell the story of the Gikuyu origin myth. He has utilised elements like the epic journey, invocation of a higher power, adventures and battles, cultural significance, indigenous knowledge, didacticism and cultural hero figure to successfully create a grand epic that resonates with a broader audience and explore universal themes of love, life and the human condition.

Recommendations for Further Research

Basing on the findings of this study, it is important to make the following suggestions for further research on the African epic perspectives:

- i) Scholars of the African epic might consider undertaking a more in-depth examination of the symbolic significance of key motifs such as the journey, the number nine, and the figures of Gikuyu and Mumbi, particularly within the context of African oral traditions and cultural values.
- ii) Subsequent research could explore *The Perfect Nine* through comparative analysis with similar narratives from other indigenous cultures, in order to identify both common themes and divergent strategies by which communities construct social cohesion.
- iii) Researchers may also wish to investigate how *The Perfect Nine's* portrayal of female leadership might inform contemporary policy discussions, particularly regarding gender inclusivity and approaches to crisis management.
- iv) It may be worthwhile for future scholars to focus on the structural elements of the text, analyzing how Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o employs epic verse and draws upon not only Homeric traditions but also other classical and mythological frameworks.

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