

THE CREATIVE WRITER AS A SOCIAL CRITIC: A STUDY OF MEJA MWANGI'S *KILL ME QUICK* AND *GOING DOWN RIVER ROAD*

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ABSTRACT

The creative writer in most societies rarely stays neutral. He draws his themes and sometimes formal features from his society and in doing so he takes a stand, whether positive or negative, on the experience he highlights. He addresses his message to his society to help members of the society in understanding themselves better. The aim of this study is to underline Meja Mwangi's role as a novelist and social critic as reflected in his works *Kill Me Quick* (1973) and *Going Down River Road* (1976) which best illustrate manifestations of the sordid socioeconomic problems that Mwangi persevered to expose and oppose. A justification for the treatment of this topic is related to the conviction that art has a functional role in awakening people's consciousness of the socio-economic condition for the purpose of rejecting all kinds of social and political abuse and injustice. The paper explicates Mwangi's skilful and artistic manipulation of his themes, settings, characters and technical devices in his novels to assert the pivotal role of the creative writer as a social critic.

Keywords: African literature, Meja Mwangi, literature and social criticism, *Kill Me Quick*, *Going Down River Road*.