

HEROISM IN NGUGI WA THIONG'O'S *THE BLACK HERMIT* AND *THE TRIAL OF DEDAN KIMATHI*

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A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERATURE, FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY, IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELOR OF ARTS (B.A HONS) DEGREE IN ENGLISH AND LITERATURE

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that I Samuel Ayomide APATA, a student of the Department of English and Literature, with matriculation number ART2100340 has completed the requirements for coursework and research for the Bachelor of Arts degree in the University of Benin. The work embodied in this project is original and has not been submitted in part or whole to any other university or institution.

Prof. A.P Mamudu
(Supervisor)

Date: _____

DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to God for care, love, grace, and his gift of life that allowed me to be alive to carry out this project research and to my parents Mr. and Mrs. Apata for their neverending love, care and support for all these years.

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ABSTRACT

African countries during 18-19th centuries have been challenged by the problem of colonisation. During this period the need for heroes that can lead the African societies to freedom from the colonizers is the people's goal.

Hence this essay draws a comparative analysis of different models of heroism portrayed by Ngugi wa Thiong'o to show and prove the standard model that actually leads people to liberation and freedom. This research uses the lens of postcolonial theory to reveal the standard model which Ngugi portrayed in his plays namely *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* and *The Black Hermit*.

He argued that the standard model for a hero should be that of Kimathi who is selfless, fused, revolutionary and ready to sacrifice, not the alienated, tragic, selfish, and paralyzed model of heroism that Remi embodies. More also he showed us that heroism is not found in an individualistic effort (*The Black Hermit*) but found in a collective effort (*The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*).

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to conduct a detailed and critical comparative analysis of the concept of "Heroism" in *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* and *The Black Hermit*, both written by Ngugi wa Thiong'o. This research is to bring out the contrasting types of leadership and sacrifice that Ngugi shows through the two protagonist namely Remi and Kimathi.

1.2 Scope of Study

The scope of this study is strictly focused on the detailed literary analysis of the two specific plays by Ngugi wa Thiong'o namely *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (1976) and *The Black Hermit* (1962). The research work is centered on the portrayal of the two protagonists (Kimathi and Remi) as models of heroism. The analysis looks at their characterization, actions, motivations and ideas they represent inside the narrative of each play.

The historical context of the Mau Mau uprising and Kenya independence is an essential background for this study, but this study is not a historical analysis of these events. Rather it's concentrates on how Ngugi wa Thiong'o make use of these events and social contest to show and criticize his view of an African hero. So this study is limited

to the close Reading of these two primary texts: *The Black Hermit* and *The Trial of Dedan kimathi* and not all of Ngugi's work like *Matigari* and so on.

1.3 Methodology

This research uses a qualitative research method and in addition to that is using techniques of literary analysis and comparative analysis.

The main mode of the analysis is a closed reading of the two primary selected plays, *The Trial of Dedan kimathi* and *The Black Hermit*. The comparative analysis will be used to systematically contrast the two main characters Kimathi with Remi, showing their differences in ideas, actions and consequences of their decisions.

This study draws evidence from the two primary texts and supports the analysis with secondary sources like academic journals, books, and some critical essay on Ngugi's literary works.

1.4 Theoretical Background

This study is based on Postcolonial Literary Theory, this is a way of analyzing literature that questions the complex, lasting effects of European colonialism and its aftermath. It is a way of thinking that challenges old Western ideas, for a long time, Western thought acted as if its way was the only way or the best way.

This theory studies the deep and long-lasting problems that colonialism (when one country rules over another) caused for the culture, identity, and power of the people who were colonized. Postcolonialism isn't just about reading books written after a country becomes independent but it's a way of analyzing and breaking down the power structures, cultural beliefs, and psychological damage caused by colonial rule and its long-lasting effects.

A main idea in postcolonial theory is "writing back to the empire." This is when writers from countries that used to be colonies deliberately challenge and take apart the colonizer's version of history. This act of taking back history is what the authors of the book *The Empire Writes Back* (1989), Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, describe as a process called "abrogation and appropriation." This simply means the colonized writer takes the colonizer's language like English and makes it their own to tell their own stories and express their own realities, which had been silenced in the past.

The experts in this field like Frantz F., Edward S. and others break down and analyze the relationship between the colonizer and the people being ruled or colonized. This helps us understand new ways of defining what a "hero" is in a world that has been shaped by empires.

This study will use this approach to analyze how Ngugi wa Thiong'o builds and criticizes two very different types of heroes in his plays, *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* and

The Black Hermit. This study draws from the basic ideas of Frantz Fanon. His book, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), gives a deep psychological and political way to understand the fight against colonialism.

Frantz Fanon was a psychiatrist from Martinique who actively helped in the Algerian war for independence. He provided a basic and very important analysis of what it feels like to be colonized, combining psychology which is how people feel and politics which is how power works. Fanon's work focused on the deep mental and emotional harm of psychological wounds that colonialism caused.

He also described a path for people to become free:

In his very important book, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon describes three stages that an educated native person or an intellectual colonized person goes through on their journey to becoming a revolutionary figure like Kimathi.

Phase One: Copying or Assimilation. In this stage, the intellectual tries to prove they have completely adopted the culture of the colonizer. Their work copies European styles, and they try hard to be accepted by the rulers. They copy the colonizer's culture without questioning it.

Phase Two: Disturbed, Feeling Lost and Remembering. Next, the intellectual feels "disturbed" and lost. They feel like they don't belong with their own people or with the colonizers. This feeling makes them turn to their past, and they often develop an idealized

or glorious view of their culture before the colonizers came. They celebrate old traditions, sometimes without question, as a way to fight against Western cultural control.

Phase Three: The Fighting Phase. In the final stage, the intellectual stops trying to copy the ruler or just looking at the dead past. They become an "awakener of the people." They no longer write for the oppressor. Instead, their work becomes part of the current, real-life fight for freedom. Their art and writing become a tool or a weapon in this struggle.

Fanon's 3-stage model was very important for understanding how people's minds changed during the fight against colonialism. However, critics say it is mostly based on men's experiences. It doesn't really consider the unique situation of colonized women, who were often oppressed in two ways at once: by the foreign colonizers and by the male-dominated rules of their own native society.

Another argument of Frantz F. in his work is about the "national bourgeoisie", Fanon was very critical of the new, native ruling class which he called the "national bourgeoisie" that often took power right after independence. He argued that this new ruling group was lazy and failed to make real changes to the country's economy. Instead of building their own nation, they just became middle-men for Western capitalism. They copied the lifestyles of the old colonial rulers and kept the same unfair systems going. This led to widespread disappointment among the common people, who felt that their

lives had not really changed at all. Fanon's analysis correctly predicted the failures and corruption that happened in many new African countries.

The character Remi in *The Black Hermit* will be analyzed using the postcolonial criticism of the "native bourgeoisie" which is the new, native, Western-educated upper class.

Remi's story shows this problem perfectly. His education was supposed to make him a leader, but instead, it separates him from the culture and feelings of his own people. He becomes a "mimic man" a term from Homi K. Bhabha, which describes a colonized person who copies the colonizer's language and behavior. While this copying can sometimes be a subtle way to resist, for Remi, it just leads to a tragic internal conflict and makes him a failed leader.

Fanon's most debated idea is his argument for violence. He said that breaking free from colonialism (decolonization) is always violent, because colonialism itself is held in place by brutal force. He argued that for the colonized person who has been treated as less than human or put in a "zone of non-being" the act of fighting back with violence is a "cleansing force."

He believed this violent fight was needed to get rid of their "inferiority complex," reclaim their humanity, and build a new national identity. This idea reframes armed struggle, seeing it not as simple savagery but as a necessary, creative act of freedom. However, critics argue that violence doesn't always "cleanse" and can instead create new cycles of pain and new forms of oppression.

He wrote that the colonized thing becomes fully human only through the process of freeing itself. Dedan Kimathi's heroism which is revolutionary, defiant, and based on armed struggle is a perfect literary example of Fanon's revolutionary. When Kimathi refuses to accept the colonial court's authority, he is rejecting the entire colonial system and taking back his own power and humanity.

The famous critic Edward Said a Palestinian-American literary expert, completely changed postcolonial studies with his 1978 book, *Orientalism*.

He argued in his important book *Orientalism* (1978), the West created a twisted and insulting picture of the colonized world and its people, calling them the "Other." Literature is a key battlefield where these false pictures are fought over.

Edward Said argued that all the books, art, and knowledge the West created about the Middle East and Asia which they called "the Orient" was not neutral or objective. Instead, it was a tool for power and control. In his own words, it was a "Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient."

This tool worked by creating a very strong, simple-minded us vs. them way of thinking:

The West ("Occident"): Seen as logical, better or superior, and masculine.

The East ("Orient"): Seen as mysterious, worse or inferior, and feminine.

This collection of knowledge, which was made by Westerners for Westerners, was used to justify and continue colonial rule over the East.

In his next book, *Culture and Imperialism*, Said explained that storytelling or narrative is a key part of how empires are built. But he also argued that storytelling is a powerful place to fight back.

People who were colonized can challenge the empire by "writing back." This means they create their own stories which is "counter-discourse" that take back their own histories, declare their own identities, and tell their own stories from their own point of view. This act of telling their own side of the story is a necessary part of breaking free from colonization.

Ngugi's work is a perfect example of this. His play, *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, directly fights the British historical records that called Kimathi a terrorist. Ngugi rewrites him as a national hero and a symbol of Kenyan resistance.

Said's work was revolutionary because it clearly connected the creation of knowledge like books and art to political power. It showed how culture was secretly involved in building empires. However, his theory has been criticized for being too broad, meaning overly totalizing.

Critics say he might have unfairly grouped all Western experts together as if they were one single, unchanging thing. By doing this, they argue, Said might have accidentally

created the same kind of strong East vs. West division that he was criticizing in the first place.

Following the ideas of Fanon and Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi K. Bhabha added even more complex ideas to the study of colonial power and resistance. They focused very closely on the problems of language and representation which is how people are spoken for or shown in media and books.

Gayatri C. Spivak, In her famous 1988 essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", Gayatri Spivak asks a radical and upsetting question: is it even possible to represent the most marginalized people in a society (the "subaltern")? This term refers to people who are outside the main power structures and have no political voice or way to move up in society.

Spivak argues that when Western experts and educated elites try to speak for the subaltern, they accidentally end up forcing their own theories onto them. She calls this "epistemic violence" (knowledge violence), which ends up silencing the very people they are trying to help. The subaltern isn't one single group; it's split by gender, class, and other factors. For the subaltern woman, this silencing is even worse. She is oppressed by both the foreign colonizers and the male-dominated rules of her own society. In the end, Spivak concludes that within the current Western power systems, the subaltern cannot truly speak in a way that is heard on their own terms.

Spivak's work was important because it forced researchers to check themselves and think hard about the ethics of trying to represent other people. However, her very negative

or pessimistic conclusion has been criticized. Critics say it could lead to "political paralysis" which means making people feel so helpless that they do nothing, fearing that any attempt to help will just make them part of the problem. Others argue that her theory ignores the fact that these marginalized groups do have power and are constantly resisting and speaking out in their own ways, even if it's not in a form that Western academics can easily understand.

Ngugi's play, *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, can be seen as a powerful attempt to make the subaltern speak. He gives a voice to the Kenyan people through their hero, Kimathi. In contrast, Remi's failure as a hero is directly tied to his inability to listen to, or speak for, this marginalized community.

Homi K. Bhabha's work challenges the simple "us vs. them" or binary idea of "colonizer vs. colonized" that was used by Said. Bhabha argues that colonial power is never solid or secure, instead, it is naturally unstable and full of doubts which he called "ambivalent". He uses several key concepts to explain this complicated relationship:

Hybridity: This is the mixing of cultures to create new ones. When the colonizer and colonized meet, their cultures blend like in "syncretic" religions. Bhabha says no culture is ever "pure"; they are all always mixing.

Mimicry or Copying: The colonized person is encouraged to copy the colonizer's culture, but the copy is never perfect. It's "almost the same, but not quite." This "almost-copy"

makes the colonizer nervous and mocks their power. It shows that the "original" culture isn't so special and reveals the colonizer's own anxiety.

The Third Space: This is the "in-between" space where the two cultures meet and mix. In this space, new hybrid identities and meanings are created. It's a space that breaks down the simple "us vs. them" divide and allows for new, rebellious ideas to appear.

Bhabha's ideas gave a more detailed way to understand colonial power. He showed the smart, psychological, and language-based ways the colonized could resist the colonizers.

However, he is often criticized for his extremely confusing and jargon-filled writing, which many people find impossible to understand. More importantly, critics argue that his focus on ideas, language, and psychology ignores the brutal, real-world violence, economic theft, and armed struggle of colonialism. They say this "depoliticizes" (takes the real-world politics out of) the fight for freedom.

By using these key postcolonial ideas "writing back," the Fanonian revolutionary like Kimathi, the "mimic man" like Remi, and the "voice of the subaltern" this study will build a complete analysis of Ngugi's different and powerful ideas about heroism in post-colonial Africa.

1.5 Review of Related Scholarship and Justification of Study

Ngugi wa Thiong'o's many works have been studied seriously by academics for decades. Many scholars have written about him, examining how his political ideas changed over time, his famous decision to stop writing in English and start writing in his native language Gikuyu, and how he constantly wrote about Kenya's history during and after colonialism.

A few key books provide a base for understanding this study's topics. In *Ngugi wa Thiong'o: An Exploration of His Writings* (1983) by David Cook and Michael Okenimkpe, the authors give a complete overview of Ngugi's early work, including *The Black Hermit*. They analyze it as a strong criticism of "tribalism" and the failures of the new, educated leaders after independence.

In the same way, G.D. Killam's important book, *An Introduction to the Writings of Ngugi* (1980), follows Ngugi's growth as a writer. Killam says Ngugi's work was all part of a big project to "decolonize the African mind" or to free African people from colonial ways of thinking.

Looking more closely at the two plays, researchers often focus on their different political goals. James Ogude, in his important book *Ngugi's Novels and African History* (1999), closely analyzes *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*. He argues the play is a perfect example of "counter-history." This means it's a purposeful work of art designed to take back a national hero Kimathi, who the British called a terrorist and build a new, shared

story of resistance against the colonial government. Ogude stresses that the play was meant to be a public, political event to inspire people to act together.

Similarly, Simon Gikandi, in his book *Ngugi wa Thiong'o* (2000), looks at Ngugi's work using complex postcolonial theories. He studies how plays like *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* fight back against the colonizer's stories and power and try to create a new, shared sense of national identity. Gikandi sees this play as a key moment in Ngugi's shift to a more extreme, "people-first" style of art.

For *The Black Hermit*, an important analysis comes from Oliver Lovesey (also in a (2000) book called *Ngugi wa Thiong'o*). Lovesey talks about the main character, Remi, as a symbolic figure. Remi represents the educated African who feels cut off from his home. He's trapped between the Western ideas he learned and the duties of his traditional home. Lovesey sees the play's sad ending as Ngugi's early warning about the dangers of leaders who are disconnected from their own culture.

Justification of Study

Even though these scholars have given us great ideas about each play, something is missing causing a significant gap. Most research looks at the plays separately. They study *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* as a play about history and revolution, and *The Black Hermit* as a play about social and political problems. However, very few researchers have put them side-by-side in a detailed, focused comparison to analyze how their definitions of a "hero" are completely different.

This study is needed, because of its specific focus. It doesn't just look at the plays' themes; it makes the comparison between their two models of a hero the main point of the analysis. By putting the ideas about Kimathi (from *Ogude and Gikandi*) next to the ideas about Remi (from *Lovesey*), this research will show something new: Ngugi wasn't just writing two different plays. He was purposefully creating two opposite arguments about what makes a good African leader. This study's new contribution is to bring together the old research to shine a light on this specific clash between two types of heroes in Ngugi's playwriting.

1.6 Thesis Statement

This study uses the comparative analysis of *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* by Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Micere Githae Mugo and *The Black Hermit* by Ngugi wa Thiong'o to illustrate that heroism that gives freedom is not the alienated and tragic type of heroism but a revolutionary and collective type of heroism.

CHAPTER TWO

REMI AS THE TRAGIC AND ALIENATED HERO

2.1 Introduction

Written in 1962 for Ugandan independence, *The Black Hermit* is a sad story about the problems a newly free country and its educated class must face. The main character, Remi, is not a successful hero. He is a tragic character. His failure shows the dangers of trying to free a nation using an approach that is too abstract; carrying out actions only in his mind and head and focused only on himself.

Through the main character, Remi, Ngugi creates a "cautionary tale" (a story that warns you about danger). It's a warning about a type of heroism that is:

Individualistic; focused only on one person's ideas which in other words can be seen as selfish act.

Alienated and tragically disconnected from the real culture and lives of the people he claims to be saving.

This chapter argues that Remi is a model of a failed hero. Ngugi uses him to show that this type of leadership is a dangerous path for a newly free African country to follow.

2.2 The Alienated Hero

Remi is the first person from his tribe to go to university. He is a perfect example of Frantz Fanon's "colonized intellectual" who is trapped between two worlds. His Western education makes him believe in one unified country, causing him to hate the tribal chains

of his own people. But this education has also cut him off or alienated him from their traditions and real lives. This complete copying of Western ideas is what Fanon called Phase One.

After this, Remi runs away to the city and lives alone. He is mentally tortured, feeling torn between his tribe and his new "civilization." This puts him exactly in Fanon's Phase Two: the stage of feeling disturbed and cut-off. He holds on to a big idea of a unified nation but feels trapped by the same people who see him as their hero.

Remi's character is also an example of what the expert Homi K. Bhabha called the "mimic man." This is a person from a colonized country who copies the culture, manners, and especially the ideas of the colonizer. Remi's Western education was supposed to be the source of his power as a hero; his tribe sent him to college thinking he would come back as their savior. However, that same education is the very thing that cuts him off or alienates him from his people.

Unlike Kimathi, who learned from real-life struggle, Remi's knowledge is all from books; meaning only theoretical, big abstract ideas, and from another culture. He doesn't come back as a leader who is part of his community. He comes back as an outsider who looks down on their traditions with disgust. He sees their tribalism as a backward problem that gets in the way of his (abstract) big plan for a unified nation. His statement, "I will not be a tribal leader!" sounds modern, but it really just shows how cut-off he is. He doesn't understand that his leadership must start with, and be approved by, the very people

he hates. His ideas of being a hero were formed in an "ivory tower" (a place disconnected from real life), so he is unable to connect with the actual people.

Further more, Remi's life is a perfect example of cultural mixing ("hybridity"), which Homi Bhabha called the "in-between" space. In the city, he dates Jane a modern white woman. In the village, he is tied by tradition to Thoni his brother's widow. But for Remi, this "Third Space" does not work. It is not a place where he can create new, positive identities. Instead, it becomes a place of deep loneliness and mental breakdown.

He is a "hermit" because he cannot combine the demands of the modern world and tradition, the city and the village, or himself and his community. He sees being a hero as a one-man show; he wants to be a messiah who will break the tribe all by himself. This arrogant, big idea project leads straight to tragedy. He rejects Thoni, who represents the very tradition he hates, and this causes her to commit suicide. His final, pained cry: "I came back to break Tribe and Custom, Instead, I've broken you and me" shows that his intellectual kind of heroism has completely failed.

2.3 Remi as National Bourgeoisie and His Tragic flaws.

The play is full of the disappointment that Fanon predicted would happen after independence. The promise of freedom of "Uhuru" didn't bring wealth. Instead, it brought higher taxes and a new native government that was just as corrupt and selfish as the old colonial one. Remi feels ashamed because he convinced his tribe to vote for these new, corrupt leaders.

As an educated working class, Remi is part of this new elite class (the "national bourgeoisie") that is disconnected from the common people. His girlfriend, Jane, points this out, accusing him of "thinking yourself... superior and so much better than anyone else." Remi's inability to act and his total failure to make any real change for his people is a perfect example of Fanon's harsh criticism of the new elite, who, he said, just take over power without any real plan to change things.

Tragic Flaws

Remi's try at being a hero is ruined by major flaws. These flaws all come from his mental and emotional disconnect. He is a man full of big, smart ideas, but he freezes or is paralyzed when he has to deal with a real-life human problem.

Firstly: Loves an Idea, Hates Real People: Remi is obsessed with the idea of "the nation," but he is cruel and careless to the actual people right in front of him. His biggest failure is his relationship with Thoni, the wife he was given by tradition. He doesn't see her as a person instead he sees her as a symbol of the backward traditions he hates. His intellectual arrogance leads directly to her suicide and make his mission to be a hero for some imaginary, faceless nation turns him to a villain from the view of his own family and the people.

Secondly: Fear of His Own Culture: Remi's problem isn't just with his tribe; it's with his own identity. He can't find a balance between tradition and the modern world. Whereas Kimathi's heroism was made stronger by his culture, Remi's heroism is made weaker

because he can't find anything good in his own culture. This is exactly what Frantz Fanon warned about. He said the new, educated elite are often ashamed of their own native culture, seeing it as something that holds them back. Remi's heroism fails because it has no cultural roots to hold it down.

Third: Running Away as His Main Flaw: The main thing Remi does in the play is not lead but run away. He flees his duties in the village to become a "black hermit" in the city. This is his biggest and fatal flaw, his loneliness is not a wise, thoughtful choice, but it is simple cowardice. A true hero faces challenges like Kimathi. Remi runs from them and hides behind his books and big ideas. This proves he doesn't have the basic courage or willingness to sacrifice himself, which is what made Kimathi a hero.

2.4 Conclusion

Remi's story doesn't end with him dying as a hero, it ends in a terrible personal disaster and public shame. His last, pained cry over Thoni's dead body "I came to break the tribe... but I have broken the homestead" is his confession that he has failed completely and caused a disaster.

This chapter has argued that Ngugi purposely drew Remi as a failed hero. Remi is a warning story about the type of heroism that Remi embodies. Remi's foreign knowledge cuts him off or alienates him and makes him useless. His tragic story is a powerful warning to the whole country: do not put your faith in a disconnected, smart elite class. By showing the terrible results of this selfish or individualistic and arrogant type of hero.

Remi is a representation of Fanonian intellectual that is stuck in Phase Two, who never moves on to Phase Three which is the "fighting phase". The play, therefore, shows us the problem of the alienated hero, but it leaves a big question unanswered: What is the alternative to Remi's failure? This is the question Ngugi tried to answer in his later work that brought the other kind of hero he later supported in his play about Kimathi: a hero who is humble, part of the group, and deeply connected to the people's culture and their fight.

CHAPTER THREE

KIMATHI as the REVOLUTIONARY HERO

3.1 Introduction

This chapter looks closely at Dedan Kimathi, showing him as the perfect example of a revolutionary hero in Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Micere Githae Mugo's very important play written in 1976.

The Trial of Dedan Kimathi is completely different from the personal tragedy of *The Black Hermit*. It is a piece of "revolutionary art" with a clear political goal: to take back a national hero and change the very meaning of what a hero is in the fight against empire. The play is not an exact repeat of history, It's a creative "re-imagining" of what Dedan Kimathi, the leader of the Mau Mau uprising, truly represents.

It argues that Kimathi's heroism is carefully built not just by his rebellious words and actions. It's also built through:

The play's structure.

Its political ideas about freedom from colonial rule.

Its deep connection to Gikuyu culture and art.

The play turns Kimathi into a complex symbol. He represents a fight for freedom that is:

Uncompromising (he refuses to give in).

Collective (he represents the whole group, not just himself).

Spiritually grounded (connected to the people's beliefs).

The play's goal is to "decolonize" both Kenyan theatre and the way Kenyan people think.

3.2 The Forging of a Revolutionary Hero

The play was created as a "story to fight back" or a "counter-discourse," the main job of *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* is to fix the historical record. It's a perfect example of what Edward Said called a "contrapuntal reading" of history. This simply means listening to the silenced voices alongside the official ones.

Ngugi and Mugo looked at the official British records, which made Kimathi look like an evil, "bloodthirsty terrorist," then, they read those records in a different, critical way. They added in the hidden, unwritten stories of the common Kenyan people. The play is like an act of "story-warfare." It tries to save its hero from the "second death" which is the death of his reputation caused by the colonizer's lies.

Its goal is to undermine the official colonial history that made Kimathi and the Mau Mau movement look evil. Colonial stories had painted Kimathi as a "bloodthirsty terrorist" and the Mau Mau as a "savage cult." Ngugi and Mugo directly challenge this "power to tell the story" (a key idea from Edward Said) by retelling Kenyan history from the point of view of the common people. In this new story, they "bring back" Dedan Kimathi as a hero. They do this by inventing a new villain for the play, Shaw Henderson who is a mix of all colonial authorities. This allows Kimathi to literally debate and defeat the ideas of imperialism on stage. This is a perfect example of Said's "writing back" theory being used as a tool for freedom.

The authors state this goal very clearly in the book's "preface". This "taking back" of Kimathi is more than just defending him. It's about a complete change in viewpoint. The play focuses on Kimathi's mind, his strategy, and his deep thoughts, by doing this, the authors tear down the colonizer's cartoon-like, insulting drawing of Kimathi, which falsely claimed he wasn't a complex human being. Therefore, his heroism starts as an act of knowledge. It's about:

Restoring his dignity.

Proving that the people's own knowledge of their hero was the real truth, not the official colonial version.

3.3 Revolutionary and Collective Heroism

The words and actions from the play *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* show that the character of Kimathi was built on purpose to be the perfect example of a post-colonial revolutionary hero. When we look at his rebellious attitude or defiance using the ideas of experts like Frantz Fanon and Edward Said, it becomes clear that the play has a very deep political and ideological goal.

Kimathi is the perfect example of Fanon's Phase Three intellectual the "fighting" stage. He is a true hero and political fighter, completely dedicated to the people. The four "trials" he faces in his cell are really temptations from the new, corrupt native elite (Fanon's "national bourgeoisie"). These bankers, politicians, and priests try to make him

sell out the revolution for money. His total refusal to compromise shows his ideas are pure.

When Kimathi says "no" to Shaw Henderson's business offer, he is acting out one of Frantz Fanon's main warnings. Fanon warned that the new, native ruling class ("national bourgeoisie") in supposedly "free" countries often just become tools for the old colonizers. They manage the country's money and resources, but the profit still goes to the old rulers. This is called "neo-colonialism" (new colonialism).

Kimathi's line, "We want our land. Not a partnership..." clearly states this Fanonian idea. He knows Henderson's offer isn't real progress; it's just colonialism in disguise. His heroism comes from his ability to see this economic trap and demand total freedom, not just the fake, symbolic freedom of having their own flag.

The "trial" by the African politicians and priests is another example of this same problem. These characters belong to a class, which is local "sell-outs" who are working for foreign or colonial interests. Kimathi rejects their advice to "be political" and "negotiate." In doing this, he is again acting like a Fanonian hero. Fanon argued that real freedom isn't won by polite talks; it's won through a direct "confrontation". Kimathi's heroism is his refusal to "meet in the middle" or balance things, he knows that moderation is just a fancy word for surrendering, and it only helps the new, rich elite while leaving the common people with nothing.

Finally, Kimathi's rebellion in the courtroom is a perfect example of "writing back" (a key idea from Edward Said). When Kimathi refuses to plead "guilty" or "not guilty", he is basically saying "your whole court system is fake and has no power over me". He knows the court isn't a fair, neutral judge, he knows it's just a tool of colonial power used to stop anyone who fights back.

His line, "You are the Accused. I am the Prosecutor," is a brilliant way to flip the power in the room. This changes his "trial" from a simple court case into a political performance. By doing this as Said suggested, Kimathi attacks the colonizer's story at its very source, He rejects their authority to define him or his fight for freedom. His heroism is a form of knowledge resistance, he is rejecting the colonizer's entire way of thinking and judging the world.

In all of these "trials," Kimathi's heroism is always the same, it is based on a strong, clear set of beliefs, and it perfectly matches the main ideas of postcolonial revolutionary theory.

Collective Heroism

The play offers a powerful answer to the question asked by Gayatri Spivak: "Can the subaltern (the common, marginalized people) speak?" The play's answer is YES. It makes the subaltern speak by changing the hero from one single person into a symbol for the whole group. Kimathi is not shown as a "Great Man" acting alone. He is shown as the living representation of the "collective will" of all Kenyan people. The play does this by

mixing traditional Gikuyu performances like songs, dances, and rituals right into the play, this gives a voice to the culture of the common people, not just the elite.

Also, the story is shared by symbolic characters named only "Woman," "Boy," and "Girl." They stand for all the oppressed people, and we watch them become politically aware. The "Woman" gives us the key to understanding Kimathi. When the "Boy" repeats myths that Kimathi is superhuman ("They say he used to talk with God"), the "Woman" changes the meaning. She says it's not his personal power, but the collective power of the people: "Yes. The fighting god in us...the oppressed ones." This very important line changes Kimathi from a god-like savior into a symbol of the people's own power to fight back. He is a hero only because he represents them.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that Dedan Kimathi is forged into Ngugi's perfect hero through a process with many layers:

He is a reclaimed historical figure (taken back from colonial lies).

He is a revolutionary with pure beliefs (ideologically pure).

He is a symbol of the whole group (embodiment of the collective).

He is a culturally real (authentic) warrior.

At the end of the play, Kimathi's execution is changed. It's not just an act of the colonizers crushing him; it turns into the creation of a generative symbol (a symbol that creates new energy and life). His physical death is not the end, it is a necessary sacrifice that makes

sure the fight will continue. He becomes a symbolic martyr (someone who dies for a great cause), and his story becomes bigger than his own life, turning into a powerful political tool.

The final picture of the Boy and Girl picking up the gun is the ultimate proof of his heroic legacy. His death is not an ending; it is a catalyst (something that starts a new reaction), like a seed planted for the future.

He represents the perfect, tough standard that all other types of leaders, including the failed intellectualism style of Remi, must be compared against.

This means the heroism in this play is mainly about teaching. The play's two-part story following both Kimathi and the Boy/Girl is designed to teach the audience how to be heroes. The Boy and Girl start out as separate, selfish, colonized people, but the Woman teaches them how to be revolutionaries. Even though Kimathi's physical body will be killed, his revolutionary spirit is passed on to the next generation. The play is a powerful tool for "decolonizing the mind." It shows that heroism is not a rare, in-born quality, but it is a political way of thinking that can be learned, shared, and passed on.

CHAPTER FOUR

TWO VISIONS OF AN AFRICAN HERO: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF HEROISM.

4.1 Introduction

This chapter directly compares the two types of heroes I have discussed, by putting Dedan Kimathi (the tough revolutionary) right next to Remi (the failed intellectual), we can see the huge difference between Remi (*The Black Hermit*) and Dedan Kimathi (*The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*) which shows how much Ngugi wa Thiong'o's ideas and art style changed over time and his deep political argument about what makes a true leader in Africa.

This change shows him moving away from just criticizing the problems of a newly free country and toward a full revolutionary belief (Fanonian ideas).

Comparing both plays together make one powerful point: a hero in Africa should not be a cut-off (alienated) individual. A hero should be a symbol of the entire group. This comparison shows that the two plays aren't just separate stories. They work together like a debate, where Remi's failure helps to prove why Kimathi's way was the right one.

4.2 Comparison

The Form:

Kimathi's heroism is made even stronger by the style of the play itself, which is based on the art of Gikuyu oral spoken traditions. Ngugi and Mugo created a total theatre, this means the dialogue cannot be separated from the music, dance, and rituals. This was a purposeful political choice. It matches the play's style with its revolutionary message and connects to Ngugi's later arguments in his book, *Decolonising the Mind*.

For example, the play is frequently marked by pantomimes (acting without words) and the singing of revolutionary songs, like the "Muthirigu" (a traditional protest dance-song).

These are not just decorative breaks, they are the living, breathing spirit of the revolution that keeps Kimathi strong in his prison cell. When the common people dance about the history of their land being stolen, they are performing the very historical memory that fuels Kimathi's determination.

This style proves that Kimathi is not a lonely intellectual like Remi. He is the result of a long, continuous history of cultural and political resistance. His heroism is therefore shown to be culturally real, spiritually powerful, and deeply connected to the artistic traditions of the very people he represents. It is a heroism that sings and dances its rebellion.

On the other hand, the very way *The Black Hermit* is structured matches its hero's flaws. The play is mostly just a lot of talking and thinking about feelings. It is filled with long speeches where the hero thinks out loud to himself (introspective monologues) and many arguments. This all reflects a hero who is simply trapped in his own head.

This is a huge difference from the total theatre of *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, which was full of group action, dancing, and rituals. In *The Black Hermit*, there are no revolutionary songs or group dances. The whole feeling of the play is one of loneliness and doing nothing. The stage itself often just shows what's in Remi's mind; a place of confusion and being frozen, not a place for a group to fight together. The play's focus on talking instead of doing highlights its main message: a hero who just talks but is disconnected from the group is guaranteed to fail.

The Source of Power:

The biggest and most basic difference between Kimathi and Remi is where their power comes from. Kimathi's power comes entirely from the outside and from the group, he gets it from being perfectly blended with the common Kenyan people. He is not a boss who leads from the top; he is the "sharp end of the spear" for a united group of people. His strength and his clear beliefs are just a reflection of what the group wants, he is the voice of the common, oppressed people ("the subaltern"). His heroism is a strong argument for a leadership style based on the community.

Remi's power is the complete opposite. It comes from inside himself and is focused only on himself (individualistic and selfish), he gets it from his Western education, his own intelligence, and his own ambition. He believes that he, as one special, intellectual person, can solve everyone's problems. This belief in the "Great Man" is his deadly flaw. His heroism is created by himself and not by the people, and because of that, it is weak, arrogant, and lonely. He is the perfect example of the tragic loneliness of the "mimic man."

The Battlefield:

The two heroes are fighting in completely different battlefields, and this changes what kind of hero they are.

Kimathi's arena is the real world; the physical and political battlefield of the war against the colonizers. His fight is against a clear, outside enemy: the British system and the locals who helped them. Therefore, his heroism is active, confrontational, and about real things. He is fighting for actual, physical things: land and freedom, his stages for this fight are the forest, the courtroom, and the prison.

Remi's arena, however, is almost completely inside his own head, He is fighting against big ideas like tribalism, tradition, and his own feeling of being cut-off, his battles are fought in his mind and in long, painful conversations. The key difference is: While Kimathi fights a colonizer, Remi fights himself. His heroism is passive (he doesn't do

anything) and frozen. It's just a fight of ideas in his head that never turns into any real, useful action.

Their Relationship with The People:

Whether a hero is the real deal is decided by their relationship with their people. On this point, the two characters are complete opposites.

Kimathi becomes one with his people, in which he speaks their language, knows their history of struggle, and is a living example of their biggest hopes. His famous line, "My life is the people," is literally true in the play. He listens to them, learns from them, and finally, he dies for them. Their relationship is built on shared respect and a revolutionary love for each other.

Remi is completely cut off from his people, his education creates a giant, unbridgeable gap between him and his community. He sees their traditions as problems and thinks their worries are small and stupid. He talks down to them and has no patience for them. While Kimathi dies for his home, Remi destroys his home in his own words, "has broken the homestead".

The Final Outcome:

The final test of a hero is what they leave behind, the endings of the two plays give us Ngugi's final judgment on both of them.

Kimathi's death is a victory (triumphant martyrdom). It's an act that creates life and makes sure the fight will continue. His death is not a defeat. It's like planting a seed of

revolution for the next generation (the Boy and Girl). His legacy is to inspire people, and his story becomes a founding legend for the new country.

Remi surviving, on the other hand, is a deep personal disaster and a public failure. He is still alive, but he is completely broken inside both morally and spiritually, his story does not inspire anyone; it's a serious warning. His legacy is one of destruction, he leaves behind a broken family and a community he betrayed. Kimathi's ending is a call to fight! while Remi's is a sad warning: don't do this!

4.3 Conclusion

This comparison shows a major change in how Ngugi saw heroes and his political beliefs very clearly.

Remi's story is a tragedy about being too focused on himself, his heroism is all big ideas (abstract) and intellectual, but it's totally disconnected from the real, everyday lives of his people. This leads to his own ruin and makes him politically useless.

Kimathi's story, on the other hand, shows a heroism that creates new life and is shared by everyone. His strength doesn't come from being a lone genius; it comes from his unbreakable bond with the common people. His fight is not inside his head; it's an external fight aimed right at the evil system.

While Remi is frozen by the confusing problems of the new country, Kimathi rises above those problems through revolution.

This comparative analysis shows the warning against a cut-off, Western-educated ruling class and give a strong approval for a revolutionary hero who is deeply connected to the shared fight of the common people.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.1 Conclusion

This study has compared the two types of heroes in Ngugi's plays, *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* and *The Black Hermit*. It argues that Ngugi purposefully shows two opposite heroes to explain his idea of real freedom and leadership for Africa.

This research has shown that by putting Remi the failed and tragic hero next to Kimathi the strong and revolutionary hero, Ngugi is making a clear point which is that a real hero isn't on a personal mission, instead a real hero is part of a revolutionary fight that is deeply connected to what the common people want and believe.

Postcolonial theory, especially from Frantz Fanon, gives us the main ideas needed to create new definition of a hero. Fanon's core ideas are the foundation for Ngugi's later plays.

These ideas are:

His analysis of the mental journey of the intellectual in a colonized country (like the three phases).

His criticism of the new, native elite or "national bourgeoisie" who just act like the old colonizers.

His argument that revolutionary violence is necessary to free both the mind (psychic) and the country (political).

The analysis of *The Black Hermit* showed Remi as a tragic character. He is a cut-off "mimic man" copycat whose Western education becomes a wall, not a weapon. His idea of being a hero, which was based on abstract theories or big ideas and arrogance, completely fails. It leads to personal disaster and to him betraying his community. He is Ngugi's big warning against a new, disconnected ruling class in Africa.

In complete opposite, the study of *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* showed its main character as the perfect revolutionary hero. Kimathi's heroism is defined by:

His unbreakable connection to the people.

His pure beliefs (he never sells out).

His final sacrifice.

He is the perfect example of a Fanonian revolutionary and a symbol of the group fighting back. He is a hero that Ngugi took back from the colonizer's lies by "writing back."

By showing the huge difference between Remi and Kimathi, Ngugi puts Fanon's ideas on stage.

Remi is the warning (the cautionary tale), he is the cut-off intellectual whose selfish (individualistic) and abstract ideas fall apart when faced with real-world problems.

Kimathi is the solution (the prescription), he is the revolutionary hero whose identity is completely joined with what the people want and his fight is for total freedom, not a partial one.

The comparison in Chapter Four looked in this stark difference, It pointed out the huge differences in where their power came from, where they fought, and what they left behind.

The conclusion is simple: Ngugi's work supports a hero who is active, unselfish or selfless, and part of the community. At the same time, it rejects a hero who is passive (does nothing), arrogant, and selfish (individualistic).

In the end, Ngugi argues that a real hero in a postcolonial country is not a special quality that only a few people are born with. It's also not a personal journey to find yourself.

Instead, heroism is:

A political way of thinking.

A group promise to fight.

It's the process of freeing your mind ("decolonizing the mind") and turning a colonized person into a revolutionary. The most heroic thing in Ngugi's plays is not one person's rebellious act, it's the successful passing on of the revolutionary spirit to the whole community, which makes sure the fight will continue.

In this powerful idea, the final hero isn't one person at all. It is the free (liberated) people themselves.

Today, our world is still fighting with problems of leadership, new-style colonialism (neo-colonialism), and social justice. This makes Ngugi's plays extremely relevant. He reminds us that a true hero doesn't stand above the people but a true hero

stands with the people and as one of the people. The hero is a living example of their hopes, and their future is built in the intense fire of a shared fight.

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