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An African Revolution and its Foot Soldiers: Femininity, Race, Power, and Postcolonial Trajectories in Ngugi and Mugo's *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*

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Abstract
The exploitation of African countries by colonial powers while denying their indigenous populations access to their own human and natural resources incurs a revolution. This essay focuses on the Kenyan revolution otherwise known as the Mau Mau uprising, but with particular attention to the exceptional contributions of its women who acting as foot-soldiers of the revolution have been able to undermine imperialist strategies deployed to break their male counterparts into submission. It highlights how women transcend notions of traditional femininity to collapse the powers of the colonialists by decentring it through their active participation in the war of liberation, as well as their commitment to ensure future generations are not left out of the struggle. The essay also explores the praxis of postcolonial and feminist criticism to call attention to Ngugi and Mugo's historical response to Western imperialism in *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (1976), by interrogating the effect of exploitative capitalism and the resilience of the human spirit, especially that of women in Kenyan's struggle for mental emancipation and socioeconomic independence.

Keywords: Colonialism, postcolonialism, feminism, revolution, race, power.

Introduction

Woman of Africa/What are you not? (Okot p'Bitek 133)

The history of modern Africa is intertwined with the narratives of division among Africans and foreigners, but most importantly, it is the struggle to break free from the shackles of domination by powers – both local and foreign, that have devised strategies to milk it of its human and natural resources through coercive or consular deployment of servitude, disguised indentured labour, and the strengthening of its indebted dependence to a capitalist market in order to have unchallenged decisions on almost every state of its affairs. Its effect is so extensive that "more than three-quarters of the people living in the world today have had their lives shaped by the experience of colonialism" (Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin 1). This exploitative dependence and forced relationship between the metropole and its subaltern subjects have been so pronounced that Fanon is convinced that "Europe is literally the creation of the Third World" (151). However, this imperialist motive has brought to consciousness opposition from Africans who have demanded self-rule and in regions where the "dominant" powers have reneged on the promises of independence, the populations resort to either diplomatic approaches or revolutionary guerrilla warfare of self-determination. European states have succeeded in "managing colonies with minority settler populations that were determined to monopolize economic resources and codify exclusive legal and political privileges" (Elkins and

Pedersen 21). In some parts of southern and eastern Africa, the intricate pattern of domination has to be physically challenged because diplomatic ties have been severed by brutal opposition. Hence, the need to also physically and ideologically revolt against the socioeconomic and politically crippling effect on not just the states, but on struggling populations trying to strip themselves of unmitigated exploitations, and consequently, the right to gain access and control of resources that had been officialized at the Scramble for Africa. This complete denial and imperialist control of the political economy of Africa is succinctly captured by Akurang and Indome stating that:

> The Berlin Act of 1885 offered a macabre bouquet of total colonization of Africa to the European imperialists who effectively occupied their spheres of influence. Thus, the application principle of effective occupation, whose pace was accelerated by the Berlin Conference, snuffed out of the sovereign existence of Africans (375).

In other words, the Conference granted permission and immunity to European powers to invade African territories without regard for sovereignty, create human and material ventures with the sole aim of enriching the coffers of Europe and its bourgeoise class of decision-makers. It is within this framework of colonial domination that we are going to explore the revolution that took place in colonial Kenya by highlighting the efforts of women as foot soldiers, as well as the challenges of colonial power during the "Mau Mau" uprising, the history of decolonization and sociopolitical resistance using Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Micere Githae Mugo's *The Trials of Dedan Kimathi* as exemplum. Within the spectrum of postcolonial discourses, it is important to note how the aforementioned work responds to the history of degradation, objectification, exploitation and the politics of its denial within the rubrics of a modern scholarship that calls Europe to attention, and to question tenets of responsibilities that the global North have failed to establish and maintain. This calling to account is negotiated around an African worldview that "seeks to give voice to revolutionary and prophetic traditions of freedom inherent in the struggles of African peoples across space and time" (West 1313).

This essay is interested in the history of colonization and the strategies devised to decolonize not only the African mind from the clutches of "white" domination but also the celebration of its Black heroes, particularly women, whose salient oppositions, mothering hands and wisdom have not been accorded its much-needed attention in the literature of political activism, colonization and the struggle for independence in African patriarchal settings. Bearing in mind that empire in modern world history meant "conquest of foreign lands, establishing dominion over them, including within one's territorial realm" (Chatterjee 96), this essay calls attention to the revolutionary oppositions devised by Kenyan women during the period of colonization, their fearless confrontations with power, and their unwavering dedication as women, mothers, and warriors without losing their femininity. The epigraph above from p'Bitek in *Song of Ocol*, testifies to the resilience and exceptionality of the African woman that it ridicules any attempt to certify what exactly the African woman is, what site or position she occupies within and beyond African and global speculations. It interrogates the substantial reach of the African woman's ability to accommodate conflict, resolve political confrontation, and fight in the spirit of nationalism while taking care of her home.

Of Ism(s) of Power, and Women at the Front

The fact that modern reality is "multidimensional, fractured and fragmented" (Rushdie 342) lends weight to an exploration of power as a site for sexual hierarchy, and bifurcation of power: first between white and black, and subsequently between women and men. It should also be taken into consideration

that "racism is inextricable from capitalism" (Scott 167). Along this line of logic, it could be argued that the African woman has not only been doubly oppressed, but socioeconomically and politically written off the pages of history as though she has not been responsible for many undocumented successes of either colonial or imperialist struggles and has stood by men in their quests for independence as well as armed struggles. Even before the likes of Spivak lament that the "subaltern as woman is even more in the shadows," (Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin 28); forced to play the second fiddle, next to the man, the African woman in particular has been shackled by the forces of history with regards to her under or misrepresentation. This multifaceted angle to her challenges and her amiable ability to surmount these crucibles demands the rhetoric from p'Bitek: "Woman of Africa/ What are you not?" In line with this inquiry into the nature of the strength of the African woman, we will look at her confrontations with foreign forces, and her place in the Mau Mau revolution amidst the emergence of new markets and economic expansions brought by the Industrial Revolution. The nature of challenges faced by African women may be similar to those of other women in different spaces but is very different in the sense that they are burdened by cultural, racial, religious, socioeconomic and political responsibilities that others are not expected to shoulder or answer to.

This is why Mohanty sees the relationship between the Third World and its women as "imagined communities of women with divergent histories and social locations, woven together by political threads of opposition to forms of dominations that are not only pervasive but also systemic" (4). Here, the long history of hardship gives credence to a struggle that is influenced by its experience. It is not just being women, but about women whose realities have been shaped by the conditions of their geographical space. The focus on racial hierarchy by the colonizer is a ploy to undermine the capacity of the colonized to govern and inflict notions of dependence that could be explored to exploit its resources. Mbembe posits that "racism, in this sense, is fundamentally a technology of dispossession' (53). These will inform the type of postcolonial resistance that Kenyan women have to engage, and their place as positioned protectors of their families which by extension is their community. It shows that African women and their femininity have to be understood from the perspective of a situation that is shaped by their turbulent experiences because, even the so-called transnational feminism for instance, could claim that women from the global dominant, as well as women struggling under the yoke of poverty, are made equal by their experience (Spivak 44).

The rise in industries triggered the need for labour and raw materials in the sense that the "factory does not gorge on human labour only, but on natural resources as well" (Ngugi 46), for the generation of wealth as seen from the expansion of the British Colonial Empire in West and particularly East Africa where Settler Colonialism was once active. The history of settler occupation in Kenya from 1900 is linked to the railway which was then called the Ugandan Railway. It was a huge investment by the British to take a strong hold on East Africa which after 1920 became Kenya. Through the initiative of the appointed High Commissioner, Sir Charles Eliot, the territory was developed as a "white man's country" (Maloba 25). A settler society according to Mosley (5), is therefore a country partly settled by European landowners-producers, who have a share in the government but who nonetheless remain a minority of the population and who in particular remain dependent, at least for labour, on the indigenous population. In Colonial Kenya, "The European community, though comprising less than 1 per cent, of the total population, constituted a kind of 'high caste', reminiscent of long-defunct European aristocracies, and occupied a highly privileged position in both the political and economic life of the colony" (Barnett and Njama 24).

One of the enduring traits of settler communities which has ensured divisions among the races is the fact that "in all such colonies the descendants of settlers developed an ambiguous love/ hate

relationship with the mother country on the one hand, and to the Indigenous populations they encountered on the other" (Quayson 145). With the support of the Western machine as exemplified by the partitioning of Africa during the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 (Kyle 13), the colonialists gained permission to take any part of Africa they found profitable for their ventures. Elkins lends weight to this, saying, "Winston Churchill declared his unyielding support for the rich and fertile White Highlands, located in central Kenya, to remain exclusively white-owned in perpetuity" (278). It is in the light of this burden of colonization, denial of rights, unequal participation and the exploitation of labour anchored by imperialism that the Kenyan working population find itself shackled by irrepressible history. They found themselves being milked of their God-given inheritance – land, and their peasants used it as fuel for running the system. Thus, they began to demand equality and dignified representation through armed resistance and had to fight for Independence after sixty years of British Rule (Barnett and Njama 23). The Mau Mau uprising of 1952 was the outcome of state violence, summary execution, rough settlement as well as Africans' reaction, and counter-violence. Colonial officials viewed Mau Mau as a rejection of all things Western and conceded it was homegrown and not Communist as earlier suspected (Elkins 1059).

However, the colonial state at first refused to acknowledge it. They aim to win both a physical and a psychological victory; as well as an ideological victory (Maloba 2). Ngugi and Mugo have chosen an accessible vehicle in the form of the theatre due to its advantage of spectacle and live action to dramatize the predicament of the masses knowing fully well that reading or performing it might impede colonial goals. They are aware as the case is in Africa that "it is not just the colonial tongue which isolates the writer from the people," but "also the question of mass illiteracy even in our languages!" (Onoge 405). The playwrights, therefore, use prose blended with poetry to capture the grassroots challenges of the masses and deploy oral and folkloric elements to stay true to the historical events. It is important to remember that "African oral literature is at once traditional and contemporary" (Chinweizu et al 30) because it is out in the villages and streets among other places. The working-class Kenyan population are like the Senegalese workers of 1947 who resisted the railway conditions imposed on them by carrying out strike actions. The novelization of this African revolution by Ousmane Sembane in *Gods Bits of Wood* (1960) has not only captured the African imagination, it has reconfigured African history in the West and reasserted the place of the African in Postcolonial discourses. In like manner, the resistance and oath-taking by the Kenyan Land and Freedom Army dubbed the Mau Mau (Njama 9), challenged the legitimacy of the British presence in Kenya, and why it seized the rein of power through the imperialist control of the factors of production.

It is important to state that the growth in economic proceedings does not reflect on the masses and thus, triggers the revolution in which they demand full participation and representation. Maloba captures the zeitgeist of the Kenyan situation during the colonial period thus:

> Under the umbrella of Mau Mau, there existed ethnic nationalism, the squatters' problem, unemployment and lack of housing in urban areas, and landlessness in the rural areas of Central Province. All these issues frustrated the politics of nationalism. The racial problem, especially the African reaction against white racism and discrimination in Kenya, also became a factor in the general grievances that gave rise to the revolt (17).

Again, Maloba posits that Kenyan racism is built on the notion that the individual is incapable of developing without European contribution or supervision and it was why:

> Eliot initially turned to South Africa, and it is from there that in 1912, a majority of settlers in Kenya came. This initial South African majority has several implications for Kenya. M. P. K Sorrenson asserts that "the European settlement in Kenya highlands was in a very real sense (though not legally) a South African colony." These settlers saw their position as being similar to that of earlier settlers in other British dominions like Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and of course South Africa…. The political and economic implication of these sentiments was that Africans would be treated as labourers, providing labor which would in turn give settlers the prosperity needed to lead a comfortable, secure life (25).

In light of the aforementioned, the African – Kenyans in this context, have to be disciplined, and controlled while the settlers demand for self-rule up till 1923, and devised ways to deal with the natives or "kaffirs" as they called them. By 1896, the Land Acquisition Act allowed the administration to acquire land compulsorily for the railway, which is followed by the Land Ordinance Act of 1902. Maloba argues that this Ordinance allows settlers to acquire lands from the commissioner on a ninety-nine-year lease. After all, one of the key features of the settler society is "the ability of the immigrant group to obtain for themselves a disproportionate share in landownership" (Mosley 5). This makes Africans merely tenants at the imperial government's will, and have no land rights themselves or properties that could be abrogated by imperial decree.

Kenya is the last in East Africa to be independent because of the interest in European settlement and change of power. The British have often "viewed Kenya's prospects with pessimism," and therefore "negotiated a transition that proved comfortable both for them and for their successors" (Hornsby 20). The focus of this essay is to illustrate how Kenyan matriarchs have assumed the positions of foot soldiers to resist British Imperialism. In other words, the women provided the womb that birthed the revolution through their unyielding spirit in the face of terror and an imperialist capitalist system. The cause Kenyan women are fighting for is caught up in the snare of the colonizers who are looming over its atmosphere to cart away anything they could. Diop in his poem "The Vulture" captures this reality in the sense that all the population can do is hope. In understanding the nature of imperialist authority, Diop accuses them:

> Of promises broken at the point of a gun
> Of foreigners who did not seem human
> Who knew all the books but did not know love
> But we whose hands fertilize the womb of the earth
> In spite of the desolate villages of torn Africa
> Hope was preserved in us as in a fortress
> And from the mines of Swaziland to the factories of Europe
> Spring will be reborn under our bright steps.

Women as Conscience and Torch-Bearers of the Revolution

African women have always been custodians of the people's traditions, and cultural ideologues, and act as the repositories of its history. In the case of the revolution against British Imperialism as seen in the Mau Mau armed struggle, the women stand as repositories of history, and the conscience of society as the character Woman did in addressing Boy and Girl who are supposed to join forces and fight against the system that denies them the opportunities of becoming the leaders of tomorrow. Woman, who is the embodiment of all working women, women suffering injustices in patriarchal settings, women yoked with imperialist mandates that emasculate their rights, women struggling to

live one day at a time, and Woman – as a character, who understands that Boy and Girl are buds of the flower of the revolution. She revitalizes their quest for freedom and calls for unity when she realizes their focus has shifted from the reality of her experience. The revolutionary Woman who just escaped a colonial agent in the form of a soldier laments the postcolonial condition of the colonized stating:

> What was it one of the soldiers said? "The way the enemy makes us thirst to kill one another." How right he was! He must be one of those lost sons of the soil. H'm. Take the case of us peasants, for one. We are told you are Lou, you are Kalenjin, you are Kamba, you are Maasai, you are Kikuyu. You are a woman, you are a man, you are this, you are that, you are the others…Yes. We are only ants trodden open by heavy merciless elephants (14).

The Woman has deciphered the plot of the colonialists and their divide-and-conquer politics, or divide-and-rule mentality, often used to pit Kenyans against themselves by emphasizing their differences. They insist on breaking up the local people into ethnic groups so they can claim one is superior to the other. Or: raise a conscious ploy to disintegrate their unity so they never unite, let alone, be on the same page to know what is going on and therefore revolt. Mamdani buttresses this point saying; "race and tribe provide the technology of colonial governance" (46). He further argues that "by institutionalizing discrimination in colonial society – racial in civil law and tribal in customary law – civil and customary laws reproduced a double vision among the colonized" (50). The woman, therefore, acts as the conscience of the wrong things being done to the people by speaking truth to power. She serves as a shepherd calling back the "lost sons of the soil" to come and join the fight for liberation. But most importantly, she expresses the powerless position of the peasants who are "only ants trodden upon by heavy merciless elephants" (14).

Even at that, she is relentless in her struggle to be a conduit in the revolution, that is why she says; "The trial of our strength/ Our faith, our hopes, our resolve/ The trial of loyalty/ Our cause," and must therefore, find the Fruit Seller who is one of the underground agents plotting against the imperialists. She is not a betrayal as she makes it clear where her allegiance and loyalty lie. This is also exemplified by Kimathi who refuses to break before the Business tycoon, the Priest and Politicians sent to his cell to lure him into accepting the Government's terms and betrayal of his people to save his neck. Kimathi who understands religion as a weapon used by the colonialists has been suspicious of people "who preach cold peace in the face of violence" (49), and therefore laments:

> This is what I always feared
> How to discern our enemies
> In black clothes, with sweet tongues,
> Cheque book revolutionaries! (50)

Ngugi and Mugo situate Kimathi within the independence challenge as a microcosm to debunk Africans willing to sell the struggle for material gains, thereby sending the people back to a neocolonial form of slavery. It resonates with the submission made by Akyeampong that "slavery and freedom existed in a dialectical relationship, each defining itself as the mirror opposite of the other" (164). It has to be understood that this was connected to the Kenyan African Union at first, till it was pushed to the point that it grew a militant wing with a nationalist ideology. By 1946, Kikuyu were already swearing new versions of traditional oaths to resist anti-squatter rules (Hornsby 40). Growing alongside a revolutionary party will help it reconcile and achieve its aims (Maloba 15). Therefore, Kenyan women during the colonial period are known for their resilience. The women as represented

by Woman as a character, serve as a torch-bearer of society, showing the path to, and for the revolution. She is among the masterminds who are planning Kimathi's escape from outside the prison walls. She was on this mission when she ran into Boy and Girl fighting over pittance and reminded them of the need to be each other's keepers. Woman plays a maternal role of reminding the young ones of being brother and sister (15). The Boy who appears to bully the Girl is cautioned that "you will turn into nothing unless you become more human" (15). Woman did not stop at plotting Kimathi's escape route for the Mau Mau fighters, she recruited more foot soldiers through her rhetoric. Woman asks Boy: "Running about fighting like that when screeners and army jeeps are all over Nyeri where is your heart? Can't you see that you are big enough?" (15).

It is important that the text reflects the racial pluralism of colonial Kenyan society, as well as testifies to the unequal racial relationship that was evidenced in imperialist societies and is representative of the populations at the grassroots. Young avers that "postcolonial cultural critique involves the reconsideration of history, particularly from the perspectives of those who suffered its effects, together with the defining of its contemporary social and cultural impact" (4). Woman, through her engagement with Boy and Girl for instance, represent the downtrodden "ants" – commoners, that have to scavenge for food from rubbish bins. The woman appeals to the mind of Boy who discloses that he is one of the street urchins scurrying from one street to the other, looking for something to feed themselves (16). Unfortunately, the places where the peasants go about looking for food are owned by foreigners: tourists and expatriates who have come to milk the country dry. They did all types of manual labours, and played tricks to escape the police who came to scare and take them away from disgracing a seemingly rich and successful country by exposing its eyesore. The irony of an American praising the country as "a beautiful ciddy… and beautiful people, eh?" The American takes pictures of the urchins, probably to use as postcards or objects of pity in their own country – feeding out of people's mercy (17). The irony is, Boy and Girl's fight started from squabbling over the mzungu's shilling – money, which is an agent of separateness and disunity planted by the foreign powers so the locals will fight against themselves. In Nairobi for instance, called the City of Life and Death, Woman finally settles the scuffle by paying back Boy and making him promise he will stop tormenting Girl.

In spite of claiming higher grounds as civilized beings from great cities, and promising liberty to the colonized, the colonialist still holds onto the milking of resources. To them, "liberty," did not contradict colonial rule but rather accommodated colonialism as territorial rule, and colonialism as the expansion of imperial trades" (Lowe 15). A capitalist abstraction to the concept of toiling masses with nothing to show for it, emphasizes the divide between the bourgeois and the proletariat classes; and it is regrettable that Boy has not eaten since yesterday (18). Woman gives twenty shillings to him to get food. Woman once again addresses the country in a powerful renouncement of imperialism and the post-colonial condition saying:

> Everywhere, Mombasa, Nakuru, Kisumu, Eldoret. The Same old story. Our people tearing one another… and all because of the crumbs thrown at them by the exploiting foreigners. Our own food eaten and leftovers thrown to us in our own land, where we should have the whole share… sweat on our soil for the profit of our oppressors. Kimathi's teaching is: unite, drive out the enemy and control your own riches, enjoy the fruit of your sweat.

For the simple reason that "political liberation did not bring economic liberation – and without economic liberation, there can be no political liberation" (Young 5), the Kenyan masses revolted so as to be included in the fiscal distribution of wealth coming from their ancestral lands. From Woman's conversation with Boy, it shows the bribery and corruption that comes with properties and amassing

wealth at the expense of a suffering population, and what is obtainable in a feudal and colonial society. This is why the colonialists are bent on acquiring more lands to impoverish the peasants who are the descendants and original owners of the land. This also shows the dangers of a capitalist economy, and how the people are being used as a means to an end by the bourgeois class. Boy bemoans his father: "The machine cut off his right hand… and he died bleeding. No medical care for employees. I was thrown out of the room he had rented" (19). This means his father was not even given his gratuity, nor were his family compensated for their loss.

Moreover, nothing that deals with wealth production is left in the people's hands. Boy also laments the shameful ordeal of fighting for breadcrumbs at bins where an Indian – a foreigner, owns the shop (19), because their parents lack the wherewithal, or are fighting the system for liberation as Mau Mau warriors. Woman on hearing Boy's narrative, revokes the experience because it is not the right way to live. They are supposed to live as civilized people in their own country, in charge of their wealth, and not just drinking and living miserable lives (19). This is one of the reasons she heeds the call of the people: the humiliated, the exploited, the submerged millions of laboring men and women of Kenya (19). Woman demonstrates a maternal trust on Boy and gives him some money to bring back the change in the manner that Girl ran away with his money. By recognizing his humanity, and entrusting him with her money, Woman makes Boy responsible, and by extension, she has civilized him, and uplifted him from his brute ways like bullying Girl, and turning him into a responsible thinking being that ends up bringing back her change. In making Boy morally responsible – the ethical question solved, Woman entrusts Boy with the task of restoring the land to its original owners (21). She entrusts him to take the loaf of bread which unknown to him is loaded with a gun, to the Fruit Seller who is to spark the revolution.

Women as Anti-Colonial Crusaders and Agents of Civilization

The history of Settler Colonialism in Kenya delayed the arrival of the black bourgeoisie and wealth producers that are indigenous to the people. The British settlement and occupation ensured they stampede any form of resistance that would hinder them from having access to the people's wealth or using their resources to build their empires in Europe. Lowe observes that the colonial mode of production employed combinations of urban and agrarian exploitation and accumulation; whereas Marx analyzed the relations of production in Western industrial capitalism as the management of urban workers by the urban bourgeoisie for instance, colonialism extracted surplus value by means of a racialized split between colonial metropole and agrarian colony (151). It is these which resulted in the use of the Mau Mau guerilla fighters who insisted on being represented alongside their people. British colonial power which is the embodiment of exploitation, is used to arrest leaders of the revolution as represented by Kimathi who is tried and incriminated by the possession of a revolver without license (25). While the judge claims "The rule of law is the basis of every civilized community" and that "justice is justice"; Kimathi counters the veracity of such claim by inquiring why there are; "Two laws. Two justice. One law and one justice, one for the man of property; the man of wealth, the foreigner. Another law, another justice, silences the poor, the hunger, our people" (25-26). Ngugi and Mugo present the plight of the Kenyan people by inquiring:

> The jungle of Colonialism? Of exploitation? For it is there that you will find creatures of prey feeding in the blood and bodies of those who toil the earth yield.
> Us.
> Those who make the factories roar
> Those who wait and groan for a better day tomorrow

The maimed
Their backs bent
Sweat dripping down their shoulders
Beaten
Starved
Despised
Spat on
Whipped
But refusing to be broken
Waiting for a new dawn
Dawn on Mount Kenya (26).

The Judge in the Colonial court is disenchanted by the eternal law of the oppressed which is freedom, and claims; "There is no liberty without law and order" (27). When a Settler claims what he has lost, he bastardizes the institution of the Mau Mau as a revolutionary movement and therefore concludes that; "British justice has gone beyond limits to tolerate this, this kind of rudeness from a mad buswog" (28). The Settlers called Kimathi names using profanities, even though most of the settlers in Kenya came as soldiers (28). Hornsby postulates that through the use of European informers, by September 1952, the courts had jailed more than 400 members of the Mau Mau, and that's when preparation for rebellion started emerging (43). Thus, by August-September of 1952, several Kenyans left for the Aberdare Mountains to prepare for war. But the imprisonment of the men against British colonization and imperialism arouses the fighting spirit in the women who come to the rescue of their people – particularly the revolutionary men. Woman who in the First Movement (22), starts plotting and recruiting fighters like Boy and others, leads the revolution from within. The Woman, like Kimathi, is a symbolic agent of liberation; liberating the young ones from colonial incarceration, and joining the physical battle. Her engagement with the people's struggles illustrates that "no amount of gunpowder can down the creative spirit of a people" (Ngugi 373).

On the psychological level, the place of women as natural caregivers that love and protect the children leaves indelible marks of memories and in some cases like Kimathi, a bitter nostalgia, that makes the revolutionaries to fight harder so as not to let down their women. Kimathi laments; "Poor mother… don't cry/ I was right to choose the path of struggle/ How else would I have looked you in the eye? …. Victory will be ours/ Mother of us, your children (32). Ngugi and Mugo eclectically present diverse forms in which colonization can manifest itself, and how their postcolonial rendering can counter such manipulation. This is because "as a modern discourse of power, the science of imperialism produces a plurality of subject and ideological positions, any critique of such a science can be accomplished only through interdisciplinary praxis" (Behdad 73).

Thus, settler colonization extends beyond land acquisition and expanding the frontier of settlement. It "often sought to weaken (or even to rid themselves of) that metropolitan control and those Indigenous populations as quickly as possible" to "develop either as mixed or plantation economies reliant on imported (usually servile) labour," or what D. K Fieldhouse labelled pure settlement colonies or what Jurgen Osterhammel calls "colonies without colonialism" (Elkins and Pedersen 2). Girl, inspired by the revolutionary permutations of Woman, has not only revolted against patriarchy, she reprimands the system that wants to abuse and molest her, calls her an idler and that she will amount to nothing (41). She kicks against the colonization of her labour, and protests when her father sends her to pick tea leaves for the cruel settler, Mr. Jones; "How he used to abuse and push us!" This is because the white man refuses to acknowledge her humanity which elucidates that "the absence of

recognition is a strategy that facilitates making a group the Other (hooks, "Representing Whiteness" 339). This othering operates both on a racial and gender register. Girl laments, "I had to run away from home, from my father, from Mr. Jones" (41). She debunks traditional subjugation in African patriarchal society and renegades colonial servitude in her decision to leave everything behind, become independent, and therefore reinvents herself by cutting ties with both gender and colonial domination. Mr. Jones' abduction of her girlhood is "infantile amnesia" (El Saadawi 32) that reflects racial and cultural differences which he will not do to a white girl or any woman of his race.

Ironically, Girl recalls how she lost her virginity while trying to run away from losing it. The Woman therefore, though hemmed in from all angles, fights both the system of socioeconomic oppression that is anchored by the white colonialists and the subjugation that comes from the local men in a patriarchal setting. Girl in particular protests that "A girl cannot run, run, run all her life" (42). She speaks out against this discrimination because silence is always seen as a woman's submission to patriarchal authority (hooks, *Talking Back* 23). Thus, she becomes a revolutionary too, takes a knife from beneath her skirt and faces Boy who is one of the patriarchal distractions weighing her down. The Girl who has grown into a woman by virtue of her experience, understands the ethics of revolution and how to behave in a colonized society. For instance, when Boy and Girl find a gun buried in the loaf of bread Woman gave them to take to the Fruit Seller, Boy becomes frustrated and wants to report the matter to the police authorities; but Girl cautions him: "If you report it, they'll surely kill you, call you a terrorist" (42). At that moment, Boy experiences an epiphany through a flashback to the Woman's voice, reminding him about how to avenge his father's death.

Through Girl who represents the Kenyan women, and Boy who represents the youth fighting colonialism, the two confront the policeman guarding Kimathi's cell to set the plan for his escape. They inquired about the Fruit Seller who is but a spoke in the wheel of the revolution (52). When they could not find the Fruit Seller, Girl resolves that since they have a gun, they could as well rescue Kimathi themselves. Girl enlightened Boy that it is such a call to arms/ armed resistance, that Woman was telling him about. In this wise, the Kenyan women as represented by Girl, are not only some anti-colonial crusaders, they double as agents of civilization as well. Woman who on her part disguised as the Fruit Seller, bribes a warder with an orange with the promise to come back, probably to strike a deal (53), transcends societally dictated femininity to practice and operate within what has been a masculine space. Shohat observes that "Contemporary cultures are marked by the tension between the official end of direct colonial rule and its presence and regeneration through homogenizing neo-colonialism within the First World and the Third World, often channelled through the nationalist patriarchal elites" (133), which is true. But in the context of the Kenyan revolution, there is a matrifocal base that takes up the mantle of authority and militia forces where the men have been limited due to the heavy crackdown on their enclaves and their arrests to Concentration Camps.

Kenyan women serve as an exemplum of the shifting of authoritarian loci or mandates to accommodate contemporary challenges. Sohat supports this point when she contends that the postcolonial "forms a critical locus for moving beyond anticolonial nationalist modernizing narratives that inscribe Europe as an object of critique, toward a discursive analysis and historiography addressing decentred multiplicities of power relations" which example includes "between colonized women and men or between colonized peasantry and the bourgeoise" (133) and this text in various ramifications portrays this fragmentation of responsibilities among the assumed self – white colonizers, and other – black colonized; and between haves and have-nots with implications on gender: male and female.

In the Third Movement, Girl muscles up courage and is brave to drag Boy in their effort to rescue Kimathi as they go in search of the Fruit Seller. They intend to give the bread loaded with a gun to Kimathi so he would shoot his way out of jail, but fate changed their plans as Woman comes in disguised as the Fruit Seller. The Woman in this context, represents all working mothers talking, educating their children (59). Woman insists that Kenyans should struggle against exploitation, oppression and should give one another strength and faith till victory is won (60). Woman and Girl therefore, are symbolic representations of Kenyan women in the struggle for liberation were proactive and ingenious in their dissemination of intelligence to beat the Western/ Colonial security measures built to harm and counter their resistance. Their strategies are meant to collapse the efforts of "war machines" set up against them. Here, war machines refer to segments of armed men that split up or merge with one another to carry out a task and has the features of a political organization and a mercantile company. It "operates through capture and depredations and can even coin its own money" in order to extract and export natural resources located in the territories they control by forging "direct connections with transnational networks" (Mbembe 85).

For instance, when Woman tells Girl and Boy to give the gun-loaded loaf of bread to the Fruit Seller, and later encounters a setback when she runs into the mouth of a gun – agent of the war machine and finds out that the Fruit Seller is one of many that were picked up in a raid and taken to the concentration camp in order to arrest the Mau Mau rebellion "She disguises to meet them." This glitch in the matrix of their revolutionary antics would have toppled the plan, but her disguise rescues Boy and Girl from falling into the trap of local security. In light of this, Kenyan women have shown sophisticated approaches and tactics in setting free their men and children in the manner they planned to free Kimathi. A good instance is when Boy and Girl ask about the authenticity of the myths about Kimathi and his powers; and a Woman, acting as the repository of knowledge and custodian of the people's history shares the folklore about his exploits (62).

In the event of the court marshal and culprits at Nyandarua Forest – a Guerilla Camp, the use of poor British citizens as stooges of the system from working-class families is exposed (62). Kimathi concludes that the history of the lowly is similar and posits: "It's always the same story. Poor men sent to die so that parasites might live in paradise with ill-gotten wealth" (64). This is the instance Ngugi and Mugo present the case of the Kenyan revolution as a fight and resistance aimed not against the British people; but against British Colonialism and Imperialist robbers of their land (64). It is therefore ironic that after Africans like Kenyan soldiers helped the British to fight against Imperialism in Burma during World War II (1939-1945) and fight in Japan; they are now helping them to fight against their own country (65). All this is for a token when compared to the wealth the foreigners are generating from the people's struggle, the building of factories, hotels, Export-Import Trades and wheat fields among others (65).

The playwrights are disenchanted that black mercenaries are used by the British powers to quell the resistance and have illustrated this through the scripting and performance of the text. Ngugi and Mugo, demonstrate the power of resistance when the people are united against exploitation and have shown through history that it is great to fight and learn from the past, but it will be a great mistake to become its slave (72). They have also shown how women bravely stood in the face of tyranny. This lends weight to Kimathi's submission to the powers of the Kenyan women. The depth of Kimathi's view will be quoted at length for better comprehension of women's role in the fight for both liberation and decolonization:

Do you see this woman?
How many task has she performed
Without complaint
Between here and the villages?
How many people has she
Snatched from jails, from colonial
Jaws of death?
How many brave warriors has she
Recruited at great risks!
Walking for miles
Hardly getting sleep
For days.
When this struggle is over
We shall erect at all the city corners
Monuments
To our women
Their courage and dedication
To our struggle
Come forward, mother of people
Teach us a lesson on
Diligence and commitment
What do you say about
These slumbers?
These surrenderers of our freedom (73).

Woman laments that the people will continue to suffer till they recognize their own (76). She understands that "the construction of the colonial subject in discourse, and in the exercise of power through discourse demands an articulation of forms of difference" (Bhabha 67), whether its racial or gendered. The reassertion of her femininity and racial capability is a rejection of the imperialist claim that the European identity and culture is superior to those of non-European peoples (Said 7). Kenyan women are resourceful as exemplified by Woman who delves into history to remind Kimathi of his own father's participation as a respected soldier in World War I (1914-1918), but fell to German fire at Tanya (75), and his brother who was also killed in the Battle of Mathani for this cause. In recounting history, women sacrifice both mental and psychological abuses to the point that Kimathi's mother becomes mad (77) and collects flowers while calling on God to spare Wambararia – her youngest. This sacrifice is seen when Girl, being a representative of Women, and Boy – also the child of a woman, storm the law court where Kimathi was on trial and wrestled him out to freedom (84). Hornsby observes that though the Mau Mau rebellion or war did not directly lead to Independence, "it forced a reassessment of policy that set Kenya on that course and eliminated any remaining chance that Kenya might go the way of Rhodesia and South Africa to become an independent, white-ruled state" (48). This is one of the reasons why the Mau Mau is engraved in the history of Kenyan liberation. It is not surprising that Ngugi focused on this struggle in *Weep Not Child* (1964) and *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), so as to sow the seed of a liberation struggle that would give the Kenyan masses a valve to claim back what they have lost during colonialism, be it material or ideological.

Conclusion

Though colonization has literally ended, its tenets and boomeranging effect have continued to determine and shape the African continent in the manner that its agency and imperialist policies need to be interrogated if the countries under neocolonial subjugation are to be truly independent. While this essay is concerned with the tussle for power and representational space(s), specifically on the exploitation of resources that birthed an African revolution in the form of the Mau Mau insurrection, it highlights the exceptional contributions of women in the forging of an African revolutionary consciousness. The essay uses a historical framework to draw attention to the resilience of African women in the struggle for independence without compromising their status as mothers, daughters, wives and sisters responsible for the safety and survival of Africans and the continent as well. It also interrogates, by exposition the politics of the so-called civilized by demystifying traditional and political roles of society to illustrate women's capacity to serve and be of service to their communities. Ngugi and Mugo, through a postcolonial, and feminist lens revitalize the surge for African unity and growth through a sensitive mission of disambiguating the intricate capitalist layers of imperialism. The essay reestablishes the significance of women as uncelebrated heroes and salient foot soldiers of the revolution that set the stool for Kenyan independence and served as a model for other African women to break free of colonial and traditional restrictions that do not serve the immediate needs of contemporary issues and modern expectations.

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