Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences

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A FANONIAN READING OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF KENYAN NATIONAL CULTURE IN THE PLAYS *THE TRIAL OF DEDAN KIMATHI* AND *I WILL MARRY WHEN I WANT*

Nazlı Deniz DEDEOĞLU

Master's Thesis

Ankara, 2024

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Nazlı Deniz Dedeoğlu tarafından hazırlanan "A Fanonian Reading of the Construction of Kenyan National Culture in the Plays *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* and *I Will Marry When I Want*" başlıklı bu çalışma, 5 Eylül 2024 tarihinde yapılan savunma sınavı sonucunda başarılı bulunarak jürimiz tarafından Yüksek Lisans Tezi olarak kabul edilmiştir.

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Yukarıdaki imzaların adı geçen öğretim üyelerine ait olduğunu onaylarım.

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Nazlı Deniz Dedeoğlu

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ÖZET

DEDEOĞLU, Nazlı Deniz. *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* ve *I Will Marry When I Want* Adlı Oyunlarda Kenya Milli Kültürünün Oluşumunun Fanoncu Okuması, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara, 2024.

Sömürge geçmişi olan birçok Afrika ülkesi, 20. yüzyılda bağımsızlıklarını kazandıktan sonra kültür kavramını kendilerine göre tanımlamaya başlamış ve İngilizlerin Afrika topraklarına kültür getirdiği iddiasını ortadan kaldırmayı hedeflemiştir. Bu konuda, kültür kavramına önemli katkılarda bulunanlar isimlerden biri de akademisyen ve yazar Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o'dur. Ngũgĩ eserlerinde, Afrika kültürünün ilerlemesini savunur ve kendi deneyimlerinden yola çıkarak Kenya'daki sömürgeciliğin trajik tarihine ilişkin açıklamalarda bulunur. Mĩcere Gĩthae Mũgo ile yazdığı, sömürge döneminde geçen *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* ve Ngũgĩ wa Mĩrĩĩ ile yazdığı sömürge sonrası dönemde geçen *I Will Marry When I Want* adlı tiyatro oyunlarında, Britanya'nın Kenya üzerindeki sosyoekonomik ve kültürel etkisi, Kenya ulusal kültürünün sömürgesizleşme dönemindeki gelişimi ve karakterlerde görülen beyazlara ve siyahlara yönelik tutum farklılıklarını tartışır. Dolayısıyla bu tez, *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* ve *I Will Marry When I Want* adlı oyunları, Frantz Fanon'ın ulusal kültür teorisi ışığında incelemekte; oyunların, "Harambee," Anavatan, Diller, Sözlü Edebiyat, Tiyatro, Mau Mau ve Dedan Kimathi gibi Kenya ulusal kültürüne ait öğeler içerdiğini iddia eder ve Kenya ulusal kültürünün gelişiminin, Fanon'ın ulusal kültür oluşumunda önerdiği asimilasyon, inkâr ve başkaldırı aşamalarına göre gerçekleştiğini ileri sürer. Fanon'ın bu üç aşaması, sömürgeleştirilmiş yerlinin sömürgecinin kültürünü benimsemekten reddetmeye ve nihayetinde benlik duygusunu geri kazanmak ve özgürlük için savaşmak üzere devrimci eylemi benimsemeye uzanan yolculuğunu tanımlamaktadır. Giriş, Kenya'nın sömürge tarihini, Kenya ulusal kültürünün bileşenlerini irdeler ve Fanon'ın ulusal kültür kavramını ayrıntılı olarak inceler. Birinci bölüm, *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*'de Second Soldier, Gatotia, Business Executive, Politician ve Priest karakterlerinin sömürgecinin değerlerini benimseyip kendi kültürlerini terk ederek Fanon'ın sınıflamasında geçen birinci aşamayı temsil ettiğini, First Soldier adlı karakterin sömürgecilerin otoritesinden şüphe etmeye başladığı için ikinci aşamayı temsil ettiğini ve Boy, Girl ve Woman karakterlerinin ise direnişi teşvik edip devrimde aktif rol alarak üçüncü aşamayı temsil ettiğini inceler. Birinci bölüm ayrıca, *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*'nin Kimathi'yi güçlü bir lider ve Mau Mau ordusunu cesur savaşçılar olarak tasvir ederek Kenya ulusal kültürünün unsurlarını, özellikle "Mau Mau" ve "Dedan Kimathi"yi örneklendirdiğini; devrimci fikirler için bir araç olarak "Tiyatro"yu, Kikuyu söz kalıpları ve şarkılar kullanarak "Diller" ve "Sözlü Edebiyat" yönlerini temsil ettiğini ve Kenya toprakları için birlik ve beraberlik gereksinimini vurgulayarak "Anavatan" ve "Harambee" bileşenlerini öne çıkardığını iddia etmektedir. İkinci bölüm ise *I Will Marry When I Want* adlı oyunda, Kioi, Jezebel, Ikuua, Helen ve Ndugire'nin sömürgecilerin davranışlarını taklit edip kendi haklarını sömürerek birinci aşamayı, Kiguunda ve Wangeci'nin başkaldırıdan asimilasyona ve son olarak inkâra uzanan dönüşümleri ile her üç aşamayı, Gicaamba ve Njooki karakterlerinin ise sömürgeci ve yeni sömürgeci baskıya karşı devrimci direnişi teşvik ederek üçüncü aşamayı temsil ettiğini inceler. İkinci bölüm ayrıca, *I Will Marry When I Want*'ın aslen Kikuyu

dilinde yazılmış olması nedeniyle “Diller” gibi Kenya ulusal kültürünün temel unsurlarını temsil ettiğini savunarak, oyun karakterlerin yeni sömürgeci üst sınıfın kendi topraklarındaki ekonomik ve politik hakimiyetine karşı kolektif muhalefetini tasvir ederken “Anavatan” ve “Harambee”yi vurguladığını, dayanışmayı teşvik etmek için şarkılar kullanarak “Sözlü Edebiyat” öğesini yansıttığını, devrimci tiyatronun yasaklı eserlerinden biri olarak “Tiyatro” bileşenini temsil ettiğini ve son olarak Mau Mau isyancılarına rol verip Dedan Kimathi’ye göndermelerde bulunarak Kenya ulusal kültürünün hem “Mau Mau” hem de “Dedan Kimathi” bileşenlerini yansıttığını öne sürmektedir. Sonuç olarak, söz konusu çalışma, Ngũgĩ’nin bu iki tiyatro eserinin Fanon’ın tanımladığı ulusal kültür oluşum evrelerini yansıttığına; Kenya’nın sömürgeci ve yeni sömürgeci dönemden, dış etkileri reddederek bağımsız bir ulusal kültürün ortaya çıkışına uzanan yolculuğunu gözler önüne serdiğine; her iki oyunun da karakterleri ve anlatıları aracılığıyla ulusal kültür mücadelesini temsil ederek Kenya ulusal kültürünü tanımlayan kolektif bir devrimci bilincin oluşumuna katkıda bulunduğuna işaret etmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Sömürgecilik sonrası Kenya tiyatrosu, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, Frantz Fanon, *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, *I Will Marry When I Want*

ABSTRACT

DEDEOĞLU, Nazlı Deniz. A Fanonian Reading of the Construction of Kenyan National Culture in the Plays *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* and *I Will Marry When I Want*, Master's Thesis, Ankara, 2024.

After gaining independence in the 20th century, several formerly colonised African nations started to define culture according to their own national literature, dispelling the myth that the British introduced culture to their homeland. As a scholar, author, and playwright, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o is among those who have made significant contributions to the concept of culture. He continuously advocates for the advancement of African culture and provides an accurate account of the tragic history of colonialism in Kenya, drawing from his own experiences. His plays, *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, co-written with Mĩcere Gĩthae Mũgo in 1976, and *I Will Marry When I Want*, co-written with Ngũgĩ wa Mĩriĩ in 1977, set in the pre-independence and post-independence periods of Kenya, respectively, represent the socioeconomic and cultural influence of Britain on Kenya, the development of Kenyan national culture throughout the decolonisation era, and the disparities in attitudes among Kenyans towards whites and blacks. Accordingly, this thesis reads *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* and *I Will Marry When I Want* in the light of Frantz Fanon's theory of the formation of national culture and argues that the plays contain elements of Kenyan national culture, i.e., Mau Mau, Dedan Kimathi, Harambee, Land, Languages, Orature, and Theatre, and illustrate the development of Kenyan national culture according to Fanon's three stages of national culture formation: assimilation, rejection, and revolution. Fanon's three stages describe the colonised native's journey from adopting the coloniser's culture to rejecting foreign influence and, finally, embracing revolutionary action to reclaim their sense of self and fight for freedom. The first chapter analyses how the characters in *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* represent Frantz Fanon's stages of native consciousness. The Second Soldier, Gatotia, Business Executive, Politician, and Priest reflect the first phase, assimilation, by embracing colonial values while abandoning their own culture. The First Soldier represents the second phase, rejection, as he begins to doubt the authority of colonisers. Lastly, Boy, Girl, and Woman embody the third phase, revolution, embracing resistance and expressing Kenya's indigenous culture while actively opposing colonial oppression. The first chapter contends that *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* exemplifies elements of Kenyan national culture, such as "Mau Mau" and "Dedan Kimathi," by depicting Kimathi as a strong leader and the Mau Mau as courageous fighters. The play demonstrates "Theatre" as a medium for revolutionary ideas, and it also symbolises the "Languages" and "Orature" aspects by using Kikuyu words and songs. Furthermore, the play emphasises the "Land" and "Harambee" components by presenting the struggle for land liberation and the need of unity in the fight for freedom. The second chapter focusses on *I Will Marry When I Want*, underscoring how Kioi, Jezebel, Ikuua, Helen, and Ndugire represent assimilation, the first stage of Fanon's theory, by imitating colonial behaviours and exploiting their own people. Moreover, it shows how Kiguunda and Wangeci go through transformations that reflect all three stages, from revolution to assimilation and, eventually, rejection, and how Gicaamba and Njooki constantly represent the third stage, signifying revolutionary

resistance to colonial and neo-colonial oppression. The second chapter argues that *I Will Marry When I Want* embodies key elements of Kenyan national culture such as “Languages,” since the play was originally written in Kikuyu. The play emphasises “Land” and “Harambee” by depicting the characters’ collective opposition to neo-colonial elites’ economic and political dominance in their own land, and it uses songs to foster solidarity, which reflects the element “Orature.” Furthermore, as being one of the banned works of revolutionary theatre, the play represents the “Theatre” component. Finally, by depicting the Mau Mau insurgents and making references to Dedan Kimathi, the play reflects both the “Mau Mau” and “Dedan Kimathi” components of Kenyan national culture. This study concludes that Ngũgĩ’s two plays, *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* and *I Will Marry When I Want*, reflect Fanon's phases of national cultural formation, illustrating Kenya’s journey from colonial subjugation and neo-colonialism to rejecting foreign influence and emergence of a unified national culture. Both plays represent the struggle for national culture through their characters and narratives, resulting in the formation of a collective revolutionary consciousness that defines Kenyan national culture.

Key Words

Postcolonial Kenyan drama, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, Frantz Fanon, *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, *I Will Marry When I Want*

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INTRODUCTION

"Postcolonial critique … is dedicated to changing those who were formerly the objects of history into history's new subjects." (Young, *Postcolonialism* 10)

Colonialism is a fact that the West cannot conceal, and there is no doubt that any Western country that has been involved with colonialism, that is, exploited another country's resources for its own interests or forcibly settled in another country's land, has a chapter called colonialism in its history book. For this reason, the history of each country colonised by the West "gradually became a subordinated part of the 'internal' history of the West" (Hall, "New" 271). Kenya is one of the nations that has been colonised by the occidental powers. Due to British commercial interests, Kenya came under British control in the 1880s, was officially recognised as a British colony in 1920, and, after over seventy-five years, finally gained independence from the British in 1963 (Harmon 56–57). Accordingly, considering Hall's quotation, it is possible to assert that Kenya's history is entwined with British history.

Undoubtedly, colonialism cannot be merely explained as claiming the history of another nation, assuming control over its government, or just travelling and settling there. Colonisers achieve hegemony by subtly assuming control of specific structures one at a time. The culture of the colonised country is one of the first to be brought under control, and it is a must for the perpetuation of domination and hegemony that the national culture of the colonised is thwarted (Cabral "National" 40). Westerners have been effective in achieving this objective, as "many years of slavery and colonial domination have, to some extent, hampered the development of indigenous African cultures" (Ayuk 126). In other words, as a result of years of colonisation, certain nations' cultures were superseded by Western cultures and were unable to advance in any way. Therefore, preserving their own culture has become crucial for the nations that have been colonised and exploited, and they have waged a fierce battle against the colonial power to construct their own national cultures and win their liberty (Fanon, *Wretched* 233). Gaining independence did not, however, completely ease fears about the colonial culture in Africa. For instance, even though Kenya gained independence, the administration's power structure remained unchanged, and colonial culture persisted

(Zwaneberg 161). Therefore, the influence of colonialism in Kenya and the efforts of the natives to prove or develop the culture of their own nation continued both before and after independence.

Because of the importance of the national culture for the self-definition and national identity for the development of independence, African writers of the colonised lands have also addressed the problematic issue of culture. For instance, "writers such as Chinua Achebe, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Wole Soyinka [...] [sought] to affirm or validate their own cultures, and 'show that Africans did not hear of civilization for the first time from Europeans'" (Innes 161). Along with his work on African culture, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o[1] is one of the names associated with significant studies on Kenyan culture. Ngũgĩ became a prominent literary figure in the 1960s, with novels such as *Weep Not, Child* (1964) and *The River Between* (1965) portraying the complexities of Kenya's transition to independence. His early books capture the idealism of decolonisation while criticising the unmet promises of political transformation (Gikandi and Wachanga 15). Ngũgĩ, among the first African writers schooled in Western traditions, criticised Eurocentric narratives and influenced postcolonial African writing (Gikandi and Wachanga 15). His final novel in English, *Petals of Blood* (1977), focused on postcolonial Kenya's economic challenges in a neo-colonial atmosphere. In addition to his novels, Ngũgĩ's contributions to Kenyan literature extend to the theatrical realm. Ngũgĩ's plays, *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*[2], co-written with Mĩcere Gĩthae Mũgo in 1976, and *I Will Marry When I Want*[3], co-written with Ngũgĩ wa Mĩriĩ in 1977, set in the pre-independence and post-independence periods of Kenya respectively, are concerned with the development of Kenyan national culture in the decolonisation period. Hence, this thesis reads *The Trial* and *I Will Marry* in the light of Frantz Fanon's theory of national culture and argues that these plays are respectively pre- and post-independence representatives of Kenyan national culture, and the attitudes of the characters in each of the plays reflect Frantz Fanon's three stages of national culture formation, namely, assimilation, rejection, and revolution.

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[1] Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o will be referred to by the name Ngũgĩ throughout this thesis.
[2] *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* will be referred to as *The Trial* throughout this thesis.
[3] *I Will Marry When I Want* will be referred to as *I Will Marry* throughout this thesis.

Accordingly, the development of culture, and the constructions of both national culture and Kenyan national culture are depicted in Ngũgĩ's post-colonial Kenyan plays, *The Trial* and *I Will Marry*. In this regard, it is important to discuss the concept of national culture in a post-colonial context. Thus, the components of Kenyan national culture and the history of the British occupation of Kenya will be recounted while the construction of Kenyan national culture in *The Trial* and *I Will Marry* will be analysed.

Culture is an arbitrary phenomenon that has been understood and described variously over the centuries by different people and nations. With the arrival of the twentieth century, "[c]ulture came to represent [an] antithesis to civilized values. Emphasis was placed on national, traditional cultures, natural language rather than artificial rhetoric, and popular culture rather than the high culture of civilization" (Young, *Colonial* 138). Raymond Williams, a Welsh scholar who developed culture within this framework and made significant contributions to cultural studies, claims in 1958 that

> [c]ulture is ordinary: that is the first fact. Every human society has its own shape, its own purposes, its own meanings. Every human society expresses these, in institutions, and in arts and learning. The making of a society is the finding of common meanings and directions, and its growth is an active debate and amendment under the pressures of experience, contact, and discovery, writing themselves into the land. (4)

Thus, Williams' culture is not something that can be acquired as a result of qualities like nobleness, education, or artistic understanding, but rather something similar to an equal right that is owned and expressed through common acquisitions simply because the agent is human and resides in a society. In the same line of thought, colonised African countries, for instance, tend to develop a culture in response to colonisation because, during colonisation, colonial powers attempt "to bring the colonized person to admit the inferiority of his culture which has been transformed into instinctive patterns of behavior, to recognize the unreality of his 'nation,' and, in the last extreme, the confused and imperfect character of his own biological structure" (Fanon, *Wretched* 236). Most colonial powers, such as Britain, tend to adopt those attitudes by implementing a civilising mission towards non-white colonies such as Kenya, taking the colonised natives' lands, enforcing rights that benefit only the coloniser, despising the natives, enslaving them with a patronising attitude, and imposing their own Western values on the natives, thereby harming the colonised people's cultural values and

making them doubt the existence of their very self and nation (Mann 4–5; Monk et al. 58–61). Ngũgĩ claims in his book *Moving the Centre* (1993), "[t]he imperialist cultural tradition in its colonial form was meant to undermine peoples' belief in themselves and make them look up to the European cultures, languages and the arts, for a measurement of themselves and their abilities" (61–62). To put it differently, the colonial powers subject the natives to parallelisation, or Anglicisation in the case of countries colonised by Britain, which results in the dissolution of their own culture into this whole new one.

Postcolonial culture hence is a culture that reacts against the colonial cultural hegemony. It aims to retrieve what is lost and restore what is damaged by the colonial rule. One significant way for the colonised Africa to break out of this circumstance, as Fanon suggests, is that the native "must demonstrate that a Negro culture exists" (*Wretched* 212). To accomplish this, the first step natives took to demonstrate the presence of an indigenous culture was to give proof of the existence of a black culture, which corresponds to the négritude movement. As Irele asserts, négritude is "[t]he only really significant expression of cultural nationalism associated with Africa—apart from small-scale local movements," and it was pioneered by intellectuals such as Aimé Césaire and Léopold Senghor (321, 345). In *Discourse on Colonialism* (1950), Aimé Césaire claims that the foundation of the négritude movement was the assimilationist environment in which blacks live because that environment led to self-shame and an inferiority complex in the natives (30). To avoid such a predicament, in his defence, Césaire emphasises the need for black people to fully embrace the fact that they are "black and have a history, a history that contains certain cultural elements of great value; and that Negroes were not […] born yesterday, because there have been beautiful and important black civilizations" (30). It may be deduced that negritude defenders assume that constructing the concept of a shared black culture will overcome blacks' shared history of colonial exploitation and cultural degradation.

Frantz Fanon, on the other hand, contends in the chapter "On National Culture" of *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) that establishing such a unified black culture is unsustainable because there are multiple different black communities around the globe, notably African and American ones (215). As he further exemplifies, "[t]he Negroes of Chicago only resemble the Nigerians or the Tanganyikans in so far as they were all

defined in relation to the whites. But once the first comparisons had been made and subjective feelings were assuaged, the American Negroes realized that the objective problems were fundamentally heterogeneous" (Fanon, *Wretched* 216). Although the fact that blacks are marginalised as a result of the white/black dichotomy makes the concept of developing a shared black culture plausible, the fact that the problems faced by black people living on different continents are not homogeneous unfortunately invalidates this concept. The approach, which presupposes a common black culture overlaps with the strategy of colonial powers, as "[w]e have seen that the whites were used to putting all Negroes in the same bag" (Fanon, *Wretched* 215). By regarding all blacks in the world as being the same and distinct from the whites in this sense, the concept of négritude involves ramifications such as generalisations and forms of essentialism, which characterises the typical colonial white attitudes towards blacks.

Furthermore, according to Léopold Sédar Senghor, "the struggle for *négritude* [...] must be the contribution [...] to the growth of *Africanity*" (49). As a matter of fact, if the négritude movement is thought to represent and be about only African blacks, the concept becomes exclusionary as well. Another issue with négritude is that, in order to break free from colonialism, one must consider that it is not only black people who have been colonised all across the world. As Young claims, "[b]y the time of the First World War, imperial powers occupied, or by various means controlled, nine-tenths of the surface territory of the globe; Britain governed one-fifth of the area of the world and a quarter of its population" (*Postcolonialism* 2). Since other races have suffered colonial domination as well, a shared black culture would only bring partial and temporary remedies. Fanon further outlines his sharp criticism towards the concept of négritude with these words: "This historical necessity in which the men of African culture find themselves to racialize their claims and to speak more of African culture than of national culture will tend to lead them up a blind alley" (*Wretched* 214). To put it differently, the concept of négritude places an emphasis on racialising culture instead of nationalising it, which is not a promising alternative for Fanon.

According to Fanon, "every culture is first and foremost national" (*Wretched* 216). Thus, he opposes the négritude movement, proposing that colonised nations should build a national culture rather than a common black culture to demonstrate the existence

of their culture. Culture, according to him, "is first the expression of a nation, the expression of its preferences, of its taboos and of its patterns" (Fanon, *Wretched* 244). One can argue that Fanon defended unity against colonialism by stressing the concept of nation in his definition of culture, thereby promoting nationalism. In fact, the origins of nationalism can be traced back to the nineteenth century, however, proponents of nationalism in that century were only "intra-European" nations (Anderson 83). The succession of independence struggles that began in regions such as Africa, particularly after World War Two, incorporated extra-European nations into the nationalist groups (Hopkins 228). Years of cultural, political, and economic neglect by colonialism made the natives realise they are distinct nations, not just territories governed by a colonial authority. Thus, "after regaining their independence, most African countries are committed to developing a distinctive national culture" (Thiong'o, *Homecoming* 12). Holding on to the idea of nationalism signifies the beginning of a new era for the natives since "[n]ationalism denied the alleged inferiority of the colonized people" (Chatterjee 30). Nationalism, in other words, served as a motivator for colonised nations to achieve decolonisation by regaining their dignity. As effectively stated by Tamara Sivanandan,

> insurgent nationalism served to reclaim or imagine forms of community again, to forge collective political identities within these imposed boundaries sufficient to challenge colonial rule. It also served as an instrument of cultural resistance against a racist colonial discourse which had long denied all cultural value to its subject peoples, claiming them culturally incapable, therefore, of ruling themselves in the modern world. (49)

That is, the entire anti-colonial nationalism movement has served to eradicate the bad legacies of colonialism, such as the so-called "backwardness" and "lack of culture" among the natives.

Realising the potential of anti-colonial nationalism, Fanon contends in his narrative centred on "native intellectuals" that liberation from domination can only happen through the establishment of national culture by those intellectuals (*Wretched* 208–9). He defines national culture as "the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify, and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence" (*Wretched* 233). However, he goes on to emphasise that national culture is not the continuation of a nation's past or even

tradition; rather, it is the components that address people's current pains and lay the foundations for a promising future (*Wretched* 233). To put it another way, Fanon defines national culture as the elements developed by a collective power with a certain amount of effort that will allow individuals in a nation to live and perpetuate their existence, rather than the continuity of old customs. Likewise, in the words of Carey-Webb, "Fanon thus offers a conception of national culture which is contingent and participatory" because the nation takes part in the creation of the culture to be created (101). Yet again, national culture is a concept that people have constructed rather than an inherent quality that privileges one group over all others. Nations, particularly formerly colonised ones, will be able to prove their existence, independence, and freedom as a result of this national culture. Thus, "[a] national culture in underdeveloped countries should […] take its place at the very heart of the struggle for freedom which these countries are carrying on" (Fanon, *Wretched* 233).

Fanon proposes three phases for this epic journey of constructing a national culture, which coincides with the process of native decolonisation. The Fanonian phases of decolonisation and construction of a national culture can be named as assimilation, rejection, and revolution. Since Fanon did not name the first and the second stage, several scholars assigned names to them. For instance, whereas the first phase is commonly referred to as "assimilation" or "assimilationist phase," titles such as "rejection," "disturbance," and "cultural nationalism" have been offered for the second phase (Morrison 47; X 108; Nayar 10). Even though Fanon referred to the third phase as the "fighting phase" (*Wretched* 222), the terms "revolution" (Morrison 47; X 108) or "nationalist" (Nayar 10) were most commonly used for this stage.

In the first phase, the phase of assimilation, the native who succumbs to colonial discourse, that is, the native who convinces himself that the only values that matter are those of the white man, perceives himself as inadequate in comparison to the white master, and he "[tries] to make European culture his own" at the expense of losing his own culture, values, and very self (Fanon, *Wretched* 218). In other words, the colonised native desires to be free of his roots; his culture, values, and people are all worthless to him, and he begins to detach himself from his own identity, masquerading as his colonial master. The native begins to speak, dress, worship, dine, or make music in a

European-like manner while mimicking the colonial master and thus the European culture. When the native's efforts are ultimately successful, he breaks away from himself and assumes the appearance of a "blurred copy" of the coloniser (Ashcroft et al. 155). As Nayar puts forward, "[w]hen the natives start thinking in the language of the white, when they ingest the food/culture of the colonizer, they simply stop being black or brown: they become deracinated and 'white-like', so to speak" (*Frantz* 9). In a nutshell, at this phase, "the native intellectual gives proof that he has assimilated the culture of the occupying power" by embracing European modes of life, abandoning his own culture, and sustaining, contributing to, and perhaps even justifying, colonial discourse (Fanon, *Wretched* 222).

The assimilation process that colonised people go through is also discussed by Ngũgĩ, Albert Memmi, Amilcar Cabral, and Homi Bhabha. For instance, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o addresses the two opposing attitudes of the native people that were brought forth by the colonial system in *Homecoming* (1972). He claims that members of the first category "lost contact with their roots. They despised anything that smelt of the primitive past" (10). Those in this group who renounced the native culture "took on the tongue and adopted the style of the conquerors" (Ngũgĩ, *Homecoming* 10). Thus, Ngũgĩ's first group of colonial attitudes includes those who adopt the conquerors' culture as their own and are uncomfortable with their own cultural heritage. In the same line of thought, the French-Tunisian author Albert Memmi writes about two alternative attitudes of the natives in the colonial context in the chapter "The Two Answers of the Colonized" of *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, and the first response of the native to colonialism is to assimilate into the colonial culture (165). As Memmi suggests, the native strives "to become equal to that splendid model and to resemble him to the point of disappearing in him. [...] His habits, clothing, food, architecture are closely copied, even if inappropriate" (164–65). Once more, the colonised takes the risk of forsaking his native culture and losing his originality for the sake of resembling the coloniser.

Moreover, Amilcar Cabral, in his article "National Liberation and Culture" (1970), contends that the natives display assimilationist behaviours because of a "theory" of the coloniser (40). According to him, colonialists employ a theory that systematically suppresses indigenous culture and cuts people off from their own culture in order to

prolong their exploitation, resulting in an assimilated or alienated indigenous group ("National" 45). This group, "assimilates the colonizer's mentality, considers itself culturally superior to its own people and ignores or looks down upon their cultural values" (Cabral, "National" 45). Consequently, an indigenous minority forsakes its cultural roots and assumes the particular lifestyle of its former oppressors. Cabral claims that the "petite bourgeoisie" makes up the majority of this assimilated or alienated indigenous minority ("National" 45).

Lastly, Homi Bhabha, in his article "Of Mimicry and Man" (1984), claims that in the course of mimicry, the colonised person mimics the coloniser, but the entity formed at the end is "almost the same, *but not quite*" (127). To put it differently, the mimic-man can only ever imitate the English coloniser, for instance, in terms of his attire, tongue, culture, or arts and therefore enters an Anglicisation process; yet, he can never be English (Bhabha 128). In contrast to the others, Bhabha claims that "[t]he success of colonial appropriation depends on a proliferation of inappropriate objects that ensure its strategic failure, so that mimicry is at once resemblance and menace" (127). Thus, Bhabha considers the phase of assimilation which involves the imitation of the colonial power to be advantageous, although Fanon, Ngũgĩ, Memmi, and Cabral regard this phase as detrimental. However, the assimilation phase is impractical for constructing a distinct anti-colonial national culture because in this phase, indigenous peoples abandon their own culture in favour of another and continue to rely on the occupying authority. To build a national culture, the assimilation phase should be abandoned and the rejection phase should be initiated. As Memmi remarks, "[a]fter being rejected for so long by the colonizer, the day has come when the colonized must refuse the colonizer" (172).

In the second phase of the nationalisation of culture, that is, in Fanon's second phase, rejection, the native discovers the true colour of colonialism and realises how problematic it is (*Wretched* 217–18). According to Fanon, in the attitudes of second-stage indigenous people striving to flee colonialism and colonial oppression, there is a comeback to their indigenous culture and people. No matter how underdeveloped they are, the rejectionist native "sets a high value on the customs, traditions, and the appearances of his people" (*Wretched* 221). Contrary to the first-stage native, who

aspires to absorb himself in European culture while remaining apathetic to his indigenous culture, people, or history, the second-stage native "not only turns himself into a defender of his people's past; he is willing to be counted as one of them" (Fanon, *Wretched* 218). In other words, the culture and values of the coloniser, which are essential for the first-stage native, are completely worthless for the second-stage native who wants to escape from the clutches of colonialism. While the former is ashamed of his own people's underdevelopment and chooses not to be like them, the latter is eager to embrace his own people and become one of them while rejecting the culture of the colonialists. As Fanon further exemplifies, for the rejectionist native,

> [t]he sari becomes sacred, and shoes that come from Paris or Italy are left off in favor of pampooties, while suddenly the language of the ruling power is felt to burn your lips. Finding your fellow countrymen sometimes means in this phase to will to be a nigger, not a nigger like all other niggers but a real nigger, a Negro cur, just the sort of nigger that the white man wants you to be. (*Wretched* 221)

However, this concept of being black as "the white man wants you to be" is not an idea that will contribute to colonialism; rather, it is one that will disturb the colonial system. Fanon claims that for the colonisers who have successfully developed the colonial system thanks to assimilationists, the natives who have progressed from the level of assimilation to the level of rejection demonstrate that everything done thus far has been futile and undermines the colonial authority (*Wretched* 221–22). Thus, thanks to the rejection phase in the construction of a distinct national culture, the colonial system is disturbed, and the natives become conscious of the necessity to abolish the system completely and move toward the revolutionary step.

Ngũgĩ, Memmi and Cabral, similar to Fanon, address the rejection process experienced by natives after the stage of assimilation. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o describes the second group, the other of the two contrasting attitudes he addresses in *Homecoming*, as follows: "The other group remained close to the soil and never completely lost contact with their traditions. [...] They started to reclaim their past, often with bitter nostalgia" (10). Furthermore, According to Memmi, in "The Two Answers of the Colonized," after the indigenous people stopped mimicking the coloniser, "the colonized's liberation must be carried out through a recovery of self and of autonomous dignity" (172). The self-recovery in question can only be realised if the native abandons his attempts to imitate the coloniser and returns to his roots.

As Memmi further exemplifies, “the young intellectual who had broken with religions, internally at least, and ate during Ramadan, begins to fast with ostentation” (176). That is, the native who acquired the coloniser’s culture, such as the way they worshipped, could not practise his own religion or culture throughout the assimilation stage. However, once the assimilation stage reaches its conclusion and the native approaches the revolutionary stage, he rediscovers his native self, makes peace with himself, and returns to his roots. Amilcar Cabral, in his article “National Liberation and Culture,” mentions a concept that he names “reconversion” or “re-Africanization” that occurs before the liberation struggle of the formerly colonised countries (45). He contends that natives strive for cultural liberation as well as total independence and that “they return to the upward paths of their own culture, which is nourished by the living reality of its environment and which negates both harmful influences and any kind of subjection to foreign culture” (“National” 43). That is, natives who have been cut off from their African selves as a result of colonial domination return to their own culture in order to ensure their cultural independence on their way to liberation, which is a crucial stage in rejecting colonialism and developing their own national culture. However, as Cabral further exemplifies in “Identity and Dignity in the Context of the National Liberation Struggle,” “return to the source” is insufficient for him to combat colonialism and obtain independence on its own (63). He argues that this phase is crucial for raising consciousness about native liberation, but the natives must then revolt to strike at the roots of colonialism and claim their independence, otherwise the return-to-roots will be fruitless (Cabral, “Identity” 63).

Frantz Fanon also realised that the only possible way to terminate colonialism and oppression and to establish a distinctive anti-colonial national culture was through revolution, the final stage of the construction of national culture, or, in his own words, “the fighting phase” (*Wretched* 222). Up until this stage, the native either disparages his own culture and become an exact replica of the white man or he recognises the value of his own culture, reclaims his dignity, and becomes a conscious native. Nevertheless, while the first two stages appear to offer a way out of oppression for the natives in their specific contexts, true salvation cannot be attained without acting. Therefore, as specified by Fanon, the conscious native who has reached a certain level of awareness

begins to sow the seeds of revolution by passing on this awareness to others—in other words, by "[turning] himself into an awakener of the people" (*Wretched* 223).

Fanon contends that during this final stage, the conscious native, who has become the primary motivator for other natives, addresses the nation by composing literary works out of thin air and becomes the spokesperson for the oppressed, silenced, and voiceless local folks (*Wretched* 223). In other words, the revolutionary native stands out as an anti-colonialist, and hence the provocative hate speech directed against the colonial system, which is absent during both the first and second stages, clearly manifests itself in the third stage. Unfortunately, such rebellious expressions are penalised—these anti-colonial revolutionary natives may find themselves "in prison […] or on the eve of their execution" (Fanon, *Wretched* 223). However, penalties fail to deter the revolutionaries; anti-colonial movements formed to oppose the regime progressively transform into a national war as the people collectivise. That is, as an expected outcome of the revolutionary stage, the nation will wage a national independence war against colonial and occupying powers and attain liberation. Herewith, in the coloniser- and occupier-free country, an anti-colonial, distinct national culture will be formed. Fanon underlines the importance of collective action in this formation since, as indicated,

> [a] national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify, and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence. A national culture in underdeveloped countries should therefore take its place at the very heart of the struggle for freedom which these countries are carrying on. (*Wretched* 232)

In short, the once-invaded yet newly independent country begins to coalesce as a nation, constructing the cornerstones of its unique national culture and therefore enabling the nation's survival. Lastly, Fanon warns the liberated nations of the tasks that must be perpetually maintained: "[T]he liberation of the national territory; a continual struggle against colonialism in its new forms; and an obstinate refusal to enter the charmed circle of mutual admiration at the summit" (Fanon, *Wretched* 235). Hence, Fanon emphasises what the colonial-free country must do to maintain its independence and forewarns about the neo-colonialism that many countries will fall victim to.

According to Ngũgĩ's *Homecoming* and Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, throughout the assimilation phase, the native, who was an admirer of the foreign

occupier and internalised his culture, now explicitly deems him an enemy and opposes anything colonial, and the native will be saved only when he achieves complete independence, and this salvation will serve to restore unique values of the natives, for instance, enabling them to develop an anti-colonial national culture (Thiong'o, *Homecoming* 13; Memmi 171-85). According to Memmi, during the revolution, indigenous people should transform any region they dwell in into a colonial-language-free environment, reminiscent of the pre-colonial period, and even if knowing and employing that language proves beneficial for him, the foreigner's language should never be employed (181). By refusing to employ any of the coloniser's values or mediums, the native draws near to escaping domination in his own land. Furthermore, Ngũgĩ emphasises the catalyst behind a revolution by quoting Tanzanian revolutionist Julius Nyerere's words. Nyerere states, "[colonised people] want a revolution—a revolution which brings to an end [their] weakness so that [they] are never again exploited, oppressed and humiliated" (qtd. in Thiong'o, *Homecoming* 13). As can be deduced from the impetus behind it, the revolution is a make-or-break situation—at the cost of their lives, the natives fight tooth and nail to reclaim their total independence and to construct a distinct anti-colonial national culture.

In this context, Amilcar Cabral, unlike other theorists, concentrates his study specifically on national liberation struggles. He argues that since culture is one of the entities oppressed by colonialism, cultural independence must be within the scope of liberty to be obtained as an outcome of the struggle, which is why he concludes that the national liberation struggle is in fact "an act of *culture*" ("National" 43). As noted by Cabral, the culture in question is "the culture of the people who are liberating themselves" ("National" 55–56). Therefore, within the framework of the struggle for national liberation, those who seek freedom correspond to a nation since a particular nation is fighting to rid itself of colonial rule. Accordingly, the culture that emerges as an outcome of the struggle will in fact be the national culture, just as Fanon anticipates in his *The Wretched of the Earth*, Cabral argues that the nation, which has become collectivised rather than divided into various factions, is officially at a bloody, full-scale war against violent colonial rule ("National" 52). Cabral concludes his article by outlining the goals of the national liberation struggle, stating specifically that one of the

goals is the "*development of a national* culture based upon the history and the achievements of the struggle itself" ("National" 55).

Another theorist who comments on national culture is Stuart Hall, whose definition, however, is not founded on the concept of national liberation struggle but on an alternative stimulating perspective on the concept. In "New Cultures for Old?" he discusses what is expected from national culture. In contrast to Fanon and Cabral, who believe that national culture is a produced concept, Hall believes that national culture is, in fact, a producer ("New" 269). Hall considers national culture to be a producer since, similar to Fanon, he believes that national culture is not a representation of the existent united culture ("New" 269). Hall asserts that national culture's responsibility is

> not to express the unitary feelings of belongingness which are 'always there in the culture', but to represent what are, in fact, real differences *as a unity*; to produce, through its ongoing 'narrative of the nation' (in education, literature, painting, the media, popular culture, the historical heritage, the leisure industry, advertising, marketing, etc.) an identification, a sense of belongingness… ("New" 269)

Thus, it can be argued that national culture serves primarily as a unifying component, without practising any favouritism for any sort of race, tribe, language, or religion that a nation consists of, and sows the seeds of belonging in the community. Moreover, unifying a nation will be carried out through means of mobilisation such as literature or the media, which are produced by the people and distributed to the entire community, explains why Fanon stresses the wholeness in a nation.

In light of all the theories concerning the construction of a national culture, this thesis regards national culture as a product of unity. A national culture is the nationalisation of all the entities and values that are acquired or reacquired by opposing the oppression of the coloniser in the postcolonial process. The vast majority of the components are those that the invaded or colonised nation relinquished—or that the invading force took away—but that the nation strove vigorously to reclaim; they are the values that are really important, even indispensable to that nation. For instance, as will be further demonstrated in Kenya, if a colonising power forces its language on the natives and causes them to lose connection to their own language, and as a response, the natives argue to fight for their language and return to using their vernacular, it indicates that the vernacular is crucial to that particular nation. Furthermore, because they struggled for

their vernacular, they ultimately cannot go without it and regard it as essential. The indigenous religion, land, art, and music are all applicable to the same scenario. Likewise, battles and revolutions fought for independence, as well as ideologies that have come to define a nation's way of life, can all become part of that nation's culture. Without a doubt, the components of national culture vary based on each invaded or colonised nation. For instance, Mau Mau, Dedan Kimathi, Harambee, Land, Languages, Orature, and Theatre can all be considered components of Kenyan national culture, as will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

Kenya, with a reasonably long history of colonisation, is the colonised nation in question. The "scramble for Africa,"[4] which grew more pronounced following the Berlin Conference in 1885, had an immediate impact on Kenya (Brooke-Smith 1–2). At the time, Britain was already setting its sight on possessing Kenya for potential commercial interests. Thus, in the same year as the conference, Britain established the British East Africa Association, which would subsequently evolve into the Imperial British East Africa Company in 1888, both of which failed (Sicherman, *Ngugi* 45). After seven years, Britain employed the popular nineteenth-century European method of protectionism—protecting trade collaborators from natives while maintaining their autonomy in the host country through trade agreements with tribal chiefs—in Kenya, establishing the East Africa Protectorate (Harmon 46–47). As the British started settling in Kenya, they began to interfere in the lives of Kenyans, such as the confiscation of specific livestock and land, and things began to escalate; nevertheless, uprisings did not begin until Kenya was officially declared a colony in 1920 (Sicherman, *Ngugi* 50–60).

In 1921, Kenyan politician Harry Thuku formed the East Africa Association, laying the groundwork for the resistance that would eventually turn into the Kenyan independence war, the Mau Mau revolt, yet he was arrested in 1922 (Sicherman, *Ngugi* 59–60). Quite unexpectedly, as a result of Thuku's detention, Kenyans began holding protests against oppression for the very first time. The desire for independence and opposition against oppression, heated in the 1920s, became irresistible for Kenyans and peaked in the 1950s. The Mau Mau, or Kenya Land and Freedom Army, led by Dedan Kimathi and

[4] Beginning in the 1880s, European powers sought to acquire African lands and establish rule in order to become the world's most powerful nation (Bauer 120).

composed primarily of Kikuyu, prepared a revolt against colonialism and attacked both colonial settlers and natives who collaborated with white people in Kenya (Thiong'o, "Role" 244). The incidents escalated to the point where the British colonial government announced a state of emergency and started imprisoning many of the Mau Mau participants, including Kenya's first president-to-be, Jomo Kenyatta (Harmon 92). The insurrection ended in 1956 with the capture of Mau Mau leader Dedan Kimathi, but things did not calm down since Dedan Kimathi was executed in 1957, and British dominance remained (Sicherman, *Ngugi* 83). All of Kenya's efforts paid off when the nation obtained independence from Britain in 1963, and the country declared itself a republic the following year (Sicherman, *Ngugi* 86–87).

It is conceivable that gaining independence from the power that has exploited a country for decades or centuries will lead to development, prosperity, or the formation of a distinct national culture in the once colonised country. However, gaining independence does not alleviate all concerns since, despite believing it is entirely free of colonialism, the formerly colonised country falls victim to the evil of neo-colonialism[5], "the worst form of imperialism" (Nkrumah xi). Kenyans who successfully fought colonialism did not, unfortunately, follow either the Mau Mau oath— "I will never sell land to any white man…" (Barnett and Njama 132)—or one of Fanon's fundamental tasks— "a continual struggle against colonialism in its new forms" (Fanon, *Wretched* 235)—causing neo-colonialism to invade their country. To put it differently, Kenya's independence was only a nominal one because when Kenya obtained independence from Britain, the political power hierarchy appeared to change, but the power and wealth structure remained unchanged (Zwaneberg 161). Thus, countries such as Algeria, Nigeria, and Kenya, "though … were formally independent, … remained economically dependent" on the powers that colonised them (Young, *Postcolonialism* 50). This condition produces a variety of issues in countries dealing with neo-colonialism. Colonial masters intervene in the internal or external affairs of formerly colonised countries through the native bourgeoisie, to whom they have delegated authority, even when they lack legal jurisdiction (Nkrumah xv). Thus, the colonisers,

[5] According to the Ghanian Former Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah, "[t]he essence of neo-colonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside" (*Neocolonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* ix).

whose influence in the country is still felt just like the first day, and the locals who have become their puppets, continue to exploit the rest of the indigenous people. In fact, colonialism still exists, but the perpetrator has shifted; whereas traditional colonialism's perpetrator was foreign powers, the perpetrator of neo-colonialism has become the pro-Western native bourgeoisie.

To take a different approach, African rulers who have been oppressed for years attempt to use the only method they know–oppression–when they seize power, which might be seen to be another detrimental impact of colonialism—needless to say, this matter does not justify their brutal regimes. Harmon sums up the scenario as follows:

> Nowhere on the continent had native Africans really been prepared to govern themselves democratically. Nor were they prepared to negotiate their way through the late twentieth-century jungle of world politics and markets. Usually the blacks who initially took power in their new nations tried to secure their leadership by force … or they soon were deposed by military coups whose leaders secured their own authority by force. In either case, the new African leaders found themselves in charge of a bewildering morass of national and international problems. (97)

Kenya provides concrete examples of the act of oppression. Jomo Kenyatta, who was imprisoned for his involvement in the aforementioned anti-colonial and anti-establishment Mau Mau resistance, later arrested Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Ngũgĩ wa Mĩriĩ for their co-written anti-colonial and anti-establishment play, *I Will Marry* (Gikandi and Wachanga 64). While Ngũgĩ wa Mĩriĩ was released, Ngũgĩ was detained for a year; additionally, Kenyatta's successor, Daniel arab Moi, who released Ngũgĩ upon Kenyatta's death, "blacklisted [Ngũgĩ] and no university wanted to employ him" (Gikandi and Wachanga 57–64). According to Ngũgĩ, anti-colonial activities that were suppressed by the British prior to independence have been thwarted after independence by "the neo-colonial regime of Kenyatta and his comprador KANU [Kenya African National Union, a nationalist political party] cohorts," such as Moi (*Detained* 8). Till the end of their reigns—1978 for Kenyatta and 2002 for Moi—both political leaders did not hesitate to ban anything oppositional and imprison those who opposed and criticised them, most especially their fellow citizens (Harmon 103).

Later in 2022, in a survey conducted in Kenya, when asked, "can ordinary people report incidents of corruption without fear, or do they risk retaliation or other negative consequences if they speak out?" 83.3% asserted that they would "[r]isk retaliation or

other negative consequences" ("Round 9" 47). This indicates that regardless of which president is in charge, authoritarian and corrupt rule has continued to the present, and those who questioned the authority have been penalised. In other words, most of the Kenyan governments that came to power constructed a neo-colonial Kenya by following in the footsteps of the colonial masters, that is to say, prioritising their own interests over their people and independence through the use of disproportionate force. C.L.R. James effectively summarises the new governments' self-interest and corruption in *A History of Pan-African Revolt* as follows:

> The states which the African nationalist leaders inherited were not in any sense African. With the disintegration of the political power of the imperialist states in Africa, and the rise of militancy of the African masses, a certain political pattern took shape. Nationalist political leaders built a following, they or their opponents gained support among the African civil servants who had administered the imperialist state, and the newly independent African state was little more than the old imperialist state only now administered and controlled by black nationalists. (117)

In this way, neo-colonialism takes the form of colonialism in Kenya, "[i]ndependence, therefore, is a sham" (Young, *Postcolonialism* 46). As an outcome, it can be argued that Kenyans' efforts to build a distinct anti-colonial national culture were to continue prior to as well as following independence.

Taking all of this into account, one could argue that Kenya has an extensive legacy of subordination. Thus, it must be addressed in the first instance that a distinct, anti-colonial, and "modern Kenyan national culture should reflect the strength and confidence of a people who have completely rejected the position of always being the *ragged trousered philanthropists* to money-mongers in London and New York and in the other western seats of barons of the profits snatched from the peasants and workers of the world" (Thiong'o, *Writers* 48). In other words, it is essential to dethrone the pro-Western natives that have ruled Kenya thus far, and the only way to accomplish this is undeniably through the national liberation struggle. Similar to how Algerians' battle against French colonisation between 1954 and 1962 is one of the components of Algerian national culture—which Fanon provides as a concrete instance—the Kenyan national liberation struggle against British colonisation can be said to constitute the initial part of Kenyan national culture as well (Fanon, *Wretched* 233).

The Kenyans' battle for independence is known as Mau Mau, which "was a nationalist, anticolonial, peasant movement [and] was similar to and different from both European peasant movements and Third World revolutionary movements" (Maloba 3). This movement, according to Ngũgĩ, "is still part of the collective memory of the Kenyan people. It is not something which people can forget; it is basic and integral to the history of their experience" (Thiong'o, "Ngugi wa Thiong'o: Interview" 124).

One of the objectives or strategies of the Mau Mau movement, which emerged in the 1950s, was to develop anti-colonial awareness and unify Kenyan people in the cause of decolonization (Kinyatti 101). The unity was so important that Kenyan revolutionaries did not want to leave anything to chance, so they required the people to take the Mau Mau oath, which is not just any oath; it includes a vow to kill if needed, and an estimated over two hundred fifty thousand Kikuyus and thousands of other ethnic groups took it (Durrani 194; Thiong'o, *Homecoming* 28; Sicherman, *Ngugi* 77). It can be claimed that Kenyans, who go so far as to take an oath, are committed to resistance and are growing more organised, indicating enthusiasm for change. By collecting oaths and educating the masses, a nationalist guerrilla army was formed, and leaders such as Dedan Kimathi and "General China" led the war (James 114). The crucial role of these people in Mau Mau cannot be overstated, yet Dedan Kimathi rather stands out since, as Shiraz Durrani in *Kenya's War of Independence* specifically states, "Kimathi fought for the land that the British stole from Kenyans. *His struggle* was national. It has now become clear that the Mau Mau War of Independence was a multi-ethnic, multi-racial, and nationalist project" (14, emphasis added). Moreover, Kimathi holds particular significance insomuch that "[h]is name has often been considered synonymous with the anticolonial rebellion" (MacArthur 1). In this context, in addition to the Mau Mau resistance, Dedan Kimathi himself can be considered a part of Kenyan national culture.

Dedan Kimathi eloquently articulates the driving reason behind the war and his aspirations for liberation with these statements: "*I do not lead rebels but I lead Africans who want their self-government. My people want to live in* a *better world than they met when they were born.* [...] *I lead them because god never created any nation to be ruled by another for ever*" (Kinyatti 115–16). Of course, fulfilling these objectives was not and would not be straightforward. Until the state of emergency was declared on October

20, 1952, the British colonial government turned a deaf ear to Kenyans' complaints, despite protests, boycotts, and the formation of anti-colonial associations (Maloba 1-2). Following the Emergency, events officially turned into a war, as "Mau Mau tactics went beyond passive resistance (strikes) to attacks on the colonial establishment. The rebels first burned white farms and crops and slaughtered cattle, hoping to scare the European settlers into leaving the country. Eventually, they began to attack white colonials—as well as native chiefs who had cooperated with the Europeans" (Harmon 92). Along with collaborator Kenyan and European casualties, the British claimed that eleven thousand Africans were put to death throughout the war; however, Kenyan sources claim that at least one hundred fifty thousand Kenyans were killed, two hundred fifty thousand were crippled, and four hundred thousand were displaced (Kinyatti 105; Sicherman, *Ngugi* 77).

Although Mau Mau was considered defeated after Dedan Kimathi was captured in 1956 and hanged in 1957, it is an undeniable fact that the seeds of rebellion and intolerance towards the colonial government were sowed by Mau Mau, and therefore Mau Mau played an active role in Kenya's independence in December 12, 1963 (MacArthur 2; Maloba 170). Therefore, it can be noted that Kenya—which risked its entirety to obtain independence, embraced itself as a nation for a common purpose, and entered a full-scale war—fought with determination against British colonialism through its nationalist Mau Mau movement. Some doubted whether the Mau Mau resistance was nationalist because most of the Mau Mau resistance was of Kikuyu origin and concluded that it was not; yet "[t]o label and condemn Mau Mau as a 'chauvinist and tribalist movement' is not enough to convince anyone because the reasons advanced do not explain the historical and social contradictions which brought about its birth and development" (Kinyatti 111–12).

In this sense, it can be argued that Mau Mau is a key element of Kenyan national culture since it is one of the pillars of the Kenyan nation and fits with the concept of the struggle for independence, and national culture. Furthermore, the majority of other Kenyan national culture components, as argued below, can be said to be directly related to or sprung from the Mau Mau rebellion, much like Dedan Kimathi himself.

While the controversy over whether the Mau Mau resistance is a national resistance or an ethnic struggle has been brought up above, it is vital to go to the foundation of the problem and discuss how it intersects with Kenyan national culture. Kenya is home to at least forty-two different ethnic groups, such as the Embu, Maasai, Turkana, Kikuyu, Kamba, and Luo, with the last three being among the largest ones (Mwakikagile 84). Since there were an abundance of ethnic groups or tribes, the colonists developed multiple plans. While conquering, exploiting, and enjoying the African continent, colonisers highlighted tribal divisions and encouraged tribes to conflict with one another so that natives would not unite and oppose colonialism, which can be classified as one of their divide and rule strategies (Harmon 60–63). In other words, they desired the people they were attempting to subjugate to be distressed among themselves to ensure that they would not recognise colonialism as the real source of their problems.

In 1950, for instance, because the majority of rioters were of Kikuyu origin, the colonial "government allie[d] itself with Luo workers against them so as to exacerbate ethnic tensions" (Sicherman, *Ngugi* 76). Hence, during the protests that took place before the beginning of the independence war in 1952, the British strove to avoid the establishment of such a unified collective force by putting ideas into the heads of another ethnic group. However, as pointed out, the Mau Mau rebellion drew support from many diverse groups, and Kenyans united as a nation, thwarting the whites' plan. Furthermore, when Kenya gained self-government in 1963, the first president, Kenyatta, emphasised national unity over tribalism through the announcement of the new national slogan "harambee," which means "pulling together" (Sicherman, *Ngugi* 86). This motto, or practically national unity, proved so widely recognised that it is still featured in Kenya's coat of arms today (see figure 1).

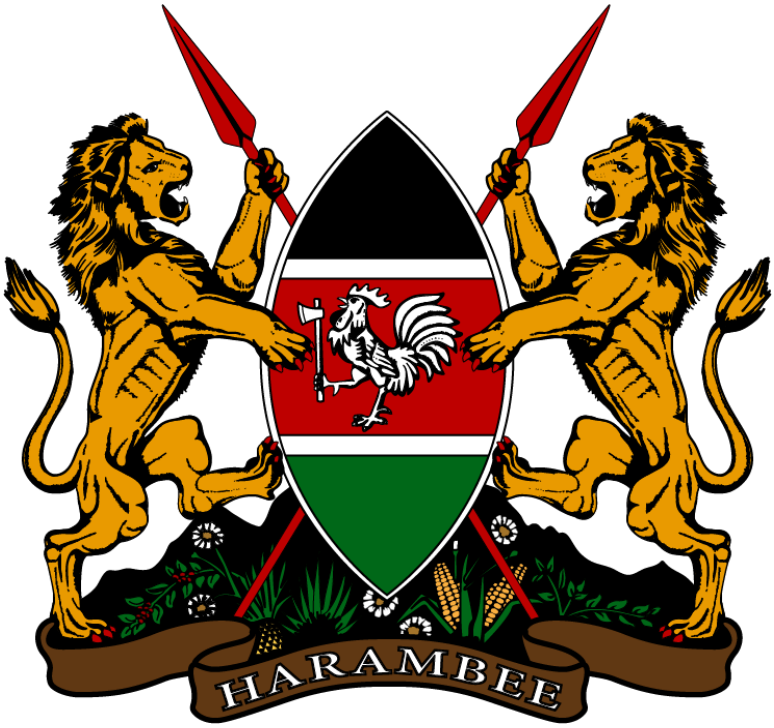

Figure 1. "Kenya Coat of Arms."[6] *ARK Africa*, August 2017.

In a 2019 survey carried out in Kenya, when asked, "Kenyans are very diverse. They come from different religions, ethnic groups, political parties, and economic and social backgrounds. Overall, would you say that there is more that unites all Kenyans as one people, or more that divides them?" 63.8 percent of individuals polled responded, "[m]uch more that unites us" and "[s]omewhat more that unites us" ("Round 8" 72). Another question in the same survey revealed that 82.4 percent of respondents agreed with the statement that "[c]ommunities are stronger when they are made up of people from different ethnic groups, races, or religions" (71). Additionally, when asked whether they felt more like Kenyans or more like members of an ethnic group in the 2022 version of the same survey, 50.5 percent responded they felt both identities equally, 28.8 percent responded they only felt they belonged to their national identity,

[6] Kenya's coat of arms depicts the colours and symbolism of their flag. In this regard, the black colour signifies the country's black population; the red colour represents the blood shed during the national independence struggle; the green colour represents Kenya's natural environment; and the white colour represents peace. While the two lions on the coat of arms symbolise protecting the country's unity and independence by wielding spears through the shield, the axed rooster in the centre of the shield indicates the beginning of an age, aspire to go further, and have the will to work. The lower portion portrays the silhouette of Mount Kenya, with agricultural items grown on Kenyan territory such as coffee and pineapple at its foot. The national motto "Harambee," which means "pulling together," appears at the bottom. (Kenya High Commission)

and 7.6 percent responded their national identity was stronger than their ethnic identity ("Round 9" 66). In other words, although colonialism attempted to prohibit the natives' sense of togetherness, or "harambee," they remained united against oppression, and they continue to argue that unity is more crucial than separation. This suggests that unity, or "harambee," is essential for Kenyans, and, given the definition of national culture provided in this thesis, the national motto "harambee" can be considered an element of Kenyan national culture.

As another example of the components of Kenyan national culture linked to the Mau Mau struggle, one can consider the indigenous land, one of the things that Africans lost as a result of colonisation. According to a Kikuyu tribal chief's recollections of the early days of the twentieth century, Kenya's land loss came swiftly and haphazardly: "A pink cheek man came one day to our Council. [...] '[The British] king is now your king,' he said, 'and this land is all his land, though he has said you may live on it as you are his people and he is your father and you are his sons.' This was strange news. For this land was ours" (qtd. in Brooke-Smith 105). Evidently, Kenyans' lands were quickly conquered and altered by Britain, even though the natives had already been living based on their very own social system on their very own land. Land is an important challenge in Kenya also because the country is a settler colony, which indicates that the British seized natives' land in order to reside there and also to employ natives as labourers on these stolen lands (Thiong'o, "To Choose a Language Is to Choose a Class" 181). This circumstance instilled in Kenyans a fear of losing their land at any moment, but, according to Harbeson, loss of land caused Kenyans to realise the importance of protecting their land; hence, British colonisers unintentionally sowed the seeds of nationalism in Kenyans (11). In other words, alongside the arrival of the whites arose a sense of safeguarding the property they owned, and the meaning of the national land intensified throughout the years of oppression.

Furthermore, the fact that the Mau Mau, which played a significant role in the independence struggle that liberated Kenya from decades of subjugation and restored their stolen lands, is also known as the Kenya Land and Freedom Army, highlights the value of land for Kenyans. This value is constitutionalised under the title "Classification of Land" in the first part of the fifth chapter of Kenya's 2010 Constitution as "[a]ll land

in Kenya belongs to the people of Kenya collectively as a nation, as communities, and as individuals" (*The Constitution*). As a consequence, despite the fact that Kenyans' lands had previously been taken over by foreign powers, the Kenyans struggled as a nation, succeeded in reclaiming their lands, and even declared in their independent constitution that these lands belonged to no one but the Kenyans. Thus, land can be considered a component of Kenyan national culture for it became indispensable to them.

Kenyans, who have done a relatively remarkable job of uniting all ethnic groups upon the matter of land, have an extra obstacle that has hampered unification: language. This obstacle arises from the existence of more than forty-two tribal languages spoken in Kenya, each of which is a member of one of the three linguistic groups known as Bantu, Nilotic, or Cushite (Mwakikagile 84). However, in order to triumph over the subordination, Kenyans needed to agree on a common tongue. During the colonial period, the British declared English "the language" and impoverished local African languages; as a result, the natives adopted the English language (Thiong'o, "Ngugi wa Thiong'o in Conversation" 403). Nevertheless, once independence was gained, it was time to change the language as natives must "forego the use of the colonizer's language, even if all the locks of the country turn with that key" (Memmi 181). That is, since English is the language of the colonial government, abandoning it will be challenging because it is employed in signage, education, and business areas, or because, although it is directly the language of the urban, the native needs to abandon it for the sake of liberty.

Conscious of all of these things, as well as the need to build a national language for the cultural growth of a newly independent country like Kenya, Kenya's first president, Jomo Kenyatta, declared in 1974 that "'[a] nation without culture is dead, and that is why I decreed that Swahili would be the national language'" (qtd. in Harries 155; Ogot and Ochieng' 139). It has been debated whether declaring Swahili a national language in a country with dozens of ethnic groups was a good idea, but one of them had to be chosen to end subjugation, so Kenyatta decided that it was safer to choose a politically neutral tribe's language rather than favouring his own politically active tribe's language—Kikuyu—and causing tribal rivalry (Harries 156). Additionally, Swahili is one of Africa's lingua francas, particularly in East Africa (Ogot and Ochieng' 221). In

fact, contrary to what many believe, Swahili serves as a key language that unites the masses as it acts as a "bridge-language" among all other tribal languages and has provided communication between insurgents during the time of Mau Mau resistance (Harries 155; Ogot and Ochieng' 221). Consequently, Kenyatta's strategy succeeded because Swahili managed to unite Kenyans, and in fact, language became an instrument of resistance.

According to article seven of the second part of the 2010 Constitution, Swahili continues to be recognised as the national language; additionally, both Swahili and English are recognised as official languages, and all other indigenous languages ought to be developed and promoted by the state (*The Constitution*). However, according to a 2022 survey in Kenya, Swahili got 27.1 percent and Kikuyu got 13.3 percent ratings among the languages spoken at home, while English is rated lower with 3.4 percent, demonstrating that Kenyans prefer Kenyan indigenous languages over English ("Round 9" 7). This is actually not a simple preference; it is revolutionary because it is sort of a rejection of imposition. Thus, it is of no significance whether Swahili or another language is adopted as the country's national language; what matters is that Kenyans reject the English language that has been imposed upon them, declare a national language, speak their own Kenyan indigenous languages, and oppose cultural domination. Kenyans have stood up for their language (or, more precisely, for languages), demonstrating that their indigenous languages are indispensable, and thus, indigenous languages can be counted as components of Kenyan national culture. Harries concurs on this point, stating that "Kenya's national culture is made up of about sixty different ethnic communities and as many different languages" (Harries 155). Ngũgĩ, similarly, claims that "the struggle of Kenyan national languages against domination by foreign languages is part of the wider historical struggle of the Kenyan national culture against imperialist domination" (*Writers* 60–61).

Finally, in terms of performative elements of Kenyan national culture, oral literature (orature) and theatre that are associated with the African continent, with the Mau Mau movement, and with anti-colonial ideologies will be analysed. As an alternative to the phrase "oral literature," since the term "literature" in fact refers to written works and oral literature is obviously "oral," a Ugandan academic proposed and coined the word

"orature," but "oral literature" continues to be the commonly used one (Auger 210). However, Ngũgĩ claims that orature "suggests a transcendence over both the purely oral, the purely literary, and the purely performed" and "stands out as a unifying force" (Thiong'o, *Penpoints* 120). That is, orature can refer to literary works that can be written, sung, or performed, such as songs, poetry, or theatrical productions. For instance, in the opinion of Cabral, written and oral traditions are present in African culture, and, according to Ngũgĩ, national literatures originate in peasant culture, and this culture is mirrored in orature (Cabral, "National" 50; Thiong'o, "Interview with Ngugi" 286). Thus, orature has become special to African culture.

Accordingly, orature was particularly used while rebelling against colonial rule, for instance, anti-colonial songs sung on the battlefield, which includes Mau Mau objectives (safeguarding the land, combating colonialism and subjugation, obtaining independence), constitute the significant percentage of it (Kinyatti 102; Durrani 156). Ngũgĩ further asserts that the songs and literary works made by Mau Mau guerillas on the battlefield developed an anti-colonial national culture (Thiong'o, *Writers* 50–51). In other words, the production of oral literature brought the natives together and emphasised who their adversaries were. The Kenyans, thus, have built an anti-colonial, freedom-loving atmosphere in which they are able to carry out the Harambee motto. Needless to say, such actions did not sit well with the colonial government, and in 1952 (when Emergency was officially declared, i.e., when the war began), the government prohibited all means by which natives were able to express themselves, including "patriotic songs and dances" (Sicherman, *Ngugi* 78). Therefore, what was prohibited was in fact orature. Significantly, "it is the only tradition against which the colonial state often took firm measures," such as "banning many of the songs and performances, and gaoling the artists involved" (Thiong'o, *Penpoints* 83). Hence, all aspects of orature, songs, poems, or performances, were used as an anti-colonial tool, and thus orature was banned by the colonisers. However, Kenyans did not cease to fight for their freedom, even singing the songs in the detention camps where they were held (Durrani 161). Orature thus became an important element of Kenyan national culture.

To delve further into one of the performing arts in particular, theatre, one of the members of orature, was another subject to acts of suppression such as prohibition.

Drama, rather than the novel and poetry, is the first literary genre that the natives cling to in resistance to domination, and their sense of national consciousness increases exponentially through theatre (Fanon, *Wretched* 239). The importance of theatre arises from the fact that "[i]n cultures where literacy has been confined mainly to a small elite group, and where there is a continuing oral culture with roots in precolonial traditions, drama and performance provide a means of reaching a much wider indigenous audience and tapping into forms and conventions which are already familiar to them" (Innes 19). Thus, among native people, those who are conscious of colonialism and resistance have employed theatre, which is the most effective and accessible medium for mobilising other unaware natives. As mentioned above, theatrical performances in Kenya were prohibited after 1952 by the colonial government, and instead of Kenyan national plays, "[f]or far too long, Western plays and musicals had conquered the imaginations of Kenyans, occupying their performance space in the colonial era and in the first two decades of independent Kenya" (Koster et al. 74–75). Kenyans are normally, if not forbidden, involved in theatre at the Kenyan National Theatre facility; however, even this "national" institution was constructed by the British colonial government; it promotes nothing but Western values and has no concern about the interests of the nation, so in fact, naming it "national" is absurd (Thiong'o, *Penpoints* 45).

Given that the restrictions on theatre persisted after independence, which was supposed to end the colonial period, a group of intellectuals decided to construct a new performance space. Ngũgĩ founded Kamĩrĩĩthũ Community Education and Cultural Centre (KCECC) in 1976 together with Ngũgĩ wa Mĩriĩ, Kimani Gecau, workers, and peasants after a woman from Kamĩrĩĩthũ village requested him and his companions to provide education for the village (Thiong'o, *Decolonising* 34–35). In fact, Ngũgĩ argues in his memoir *Wrestling with the Devil* that Kamĩrĩĩthũ centre was built with "*harambee* of sweat" (105). This centre, which was created with the people and reflects the people by performing plays in Gikuyu rather than English, caught the neo-colonial governments' eyes. This time, Jomo Kenyatta banned Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Ngũgĩ wa Mĩriĩ's play *I Will Marry*, which was performed at the KCECC in 1977, and Daniel Arap Moi shut down the KCECC and prohibited all performances in the area in 1982 (Gikandi and Wachanga xvii). On top of these, "[t]he destruction and forced closure of KCECC forced Ngugi wa Mirii, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Kimani Gecau to flee into

exile" (Ravengai and Seda 121). Once more, the theatre was prohibited and intellectuals were penalised because the administrators were afraid that people would join together for a common cause, create upheavals, and raise consciousness against an oppressive government.

Kenyans, however, did not give up their right to express themselves, particularly in contemporary times. For instance, since July 2022, the Kenya Cultural Centre's monthly bulletin has made a list of the performing arts, including the works of Kenyan playwrights, to be presented in Kenya. According to the October 2022 newsletter, even *I Will Marry* had its final performance at the Kenya National Theatre between October 6th and 16th, available both in English and Gikuyu (The Kenya Cultural Centre). This indicates that, despite the prohibitions, Kenyans reclaimed control of their National Theatre and performed and saw this defiant play in their native language.

In light of all of this, one could argue that theatre is indispensable to Kenyans, as evidenced by the fact that, despite the theatre's official British occupation in the past, natives attempted to reclaim and nationalise the theatre by working with the harambee spirit and continuing to perform there today. Thus, as stated above, they developed theatre as part of their national culture. Parallel to these ideas, Ngũgĩ claims that "we can meaningfully talk of a national literature and a national theatre as two of the most important roots of a modern Kenyan national culture" (Thiong'o, *Writers* 48). Thus, given that Ngũgĩ identifies orature as national literature, as stated, it is clear that Ngũgĩ also considers orature and theatre to be important constituents of Kenyan national culture. In fact, the relationship between theatre and national culture is very important. As Innes states,

> [d]rama has played a crucial part in the development of national cultures and audiences, and yet has received relatively little attention in postcolonial literary studies. This is all the more surprising given that dramatic performance raises so many issues that are central to postcolonial cultures – questions of identity, language, myth and history; issues regarding translatability, voice and audience; problems relating to production, infrastructures and censorship. (19)

Evidently, developing a national Kenyan drama is the best way to represent elements of Kenyan national culture, i.e., Mau Mau, Dedan Kimathi, Harambee, Land, Languages, Orature, and Theatre.

The Trial of Dedan Kimathi (1976) and *I Will Marry When I Want* (1977), which were once strictly banned, represent Kenyan national culture and contribute to the development of a national culture for the Kenyans. Ngũgĩ wrote these plays, representing two different periods of Kenyan history. *The Trial* is a play set in pre-independence Kenya, co-written by Ngũgĩ and Mĩcere Gĩthae Mũgo. The play is set during Mau Mau warfare and notably recounts the trial process that led to the execution of Mau Mau's heroic guerilla leader, Dedan Kimathi, after he was captured by the British. From beginning to end, the play highlights the challenges that the natives experienced because of colonialism and reveals both the sacrifices and betrayals they made on the route to their independence. The characters include "the local men in the name of soldiers who have joined forces with the enemy, the proponents of change, both men and women, and the young boys and girls who are also subjected to oppression," as well as the character called Woman, who "reflects on the divide-and-conquer politics of colonialism" (Parekh and Jagne 308). It can be argued that the three different stages, namely assimilation, rejection, and revolution, identified by Frantz Fanon as the stages of developing a national culture after colonisation for the colonised people are observed in the play.

In the preface of *The Trial*, Ngũgĩ and Mũgo state that they were unhappy with the lack of literary portrayal of such a respectable leader or leaders such as Kimathi and that they intended to rewrite Kimathi and his history in the first place (3). Although the story is based on true events, because the two playwrights travelled to Kimathi's place and heard first-hand information, it is "an imaginative recreation and interpretation of the collective will of the Kenyan peasants and workers in their refusal to break under sixty years of colonial torture and ruthless oppression by the British ruling classes and their continued determination to resist exploitation, oppression and new forms of enslavement" rather than a trial replication (Mũgo and Thiong'o 5). In other words, by employing a historical figure in the play, the people of Kenya are shown standing together and not collapsing against the colonial persecutions, and liberty is always emphasised. Thus, the play deals with national independence as a subject throughout, which is one of the key motives in the construction of national culture according to Frantz Fanon, and this opens the play up to analysis in terms of national culture (Fanon, *Wretched* 235). As Jeyifo claims, "Ngugi and Mugo's Dedan Kimathi shows that

culture is created or forged anew in struggle: the old songs and myths, the erstwhile values, customs, relationships and identities are reshaped and given a new meaning" (qtd. in Okunoye 236–37).

Although the play incorporates some Swahili vocabulary, it was originally composed in English. Both authors were instructors in the Department of Literature at the University of Nairobi at the time they wrote the play, and although they had considered composing it a few years earlier, Ngũgĩ claims that what drove them was a call from the state seeking a play to be performed at a festival in Nigeria (Thiong'o, *Penpoints* 43). The authors, who believed that Kenyans should see the play before it premiered in Nigeria, applied to the Kenya National Theatre for a performance, but the Kenyatta government, which was flying the British flag despite the fact that it had been thirteen years since independence, was not supportive of the play (Thiong'o, *Penpoints* 51). Fortunately, when permission to perform for eight days was acquired, an atmosphere formed, demonstrating why the neo-colonial government was attempting to ban the play. Kenyans were unifying, as Amoko describes it,

> One of the enduring memories of the premiere production of *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* is the image of hundreds of black Kenyans (some of whom had reportedly traveled quite considerable distances) spilling onto the streets of downtown Nairobi from the confines of the National Theatre triumphantly singing Mau Mau songs. As part of its attempt to articulate a true national culture, the play also provoked important debates in the Kenyan public sphere regarding the nature and legacy of the Mau Mau Rebellion. (109)

In a nutshell, *The Trial* has evolved into a play that represents Kenyan national culture as it revisits Mau Mau memories, pulls at Kenyans' heartstrings with what was done to Dedan Kimathi, reveals the intense feelings of harambee, and revives oral literature through songs. Furthermore, according to Sicherman, the play "had become transformed (in the eyes of the Kenya government) from the official Kenyan entry at a pan-African cultural festival [...] into a symbol of dissidence" ("Mythologizer" 263). Following Kenyatta's attempt to ban the play, Moi's government attempted to persuade the British not to allow it to be performed in London in 1984, engaged in demagoguery by spreading disinformation in both Kenya and London, tried to penalise the producers, and even referred to the play as "a kind of communist musical set in Africa, with much clenching of raised fists and brandishing of automatic rifles" (Sicherman,

"Mythologizer" 264). Ironically, Moi's efforts to punish the producers failed since he had already sent Ngũgĩ and Mũgo into exile in 1982 (Parekh and Jagne 305). Clearly, despite Kenya's independence, a theatre play that criticises the colonial period and attempts to represent Kenyan national culture and unites Kenyans in a common hatred (hate of imperialism) has been tried to be banned, defamed, and penalised as if colonialism still existed.

According to Sicherman, the reasons why *The Trial* became such a sensation were that one of the playwrights, Ngũgĩ, co-wrote another highly controversial play, *Ngaahika Ndeenda* (translated into English as *I Will Marry When I Want*), in 1977 with Ngũgĩ wa Mĩriĩ and was imprisoned for it, as well as the collapse of KCECC in 1982 following the suppression of *Maitu Njugira* (*Mother Sing for Me*), which Ngũgĩ wrote in 1981 ("Mythologizer" 263). *I Will Marry*, a highly controversial play, is set in post-independence Kenya, and represents the Kenyan culture in the neo-colonial period. It was originally written in Gikuyu by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Ngũgĩ wa Mĩriĩ in 1977 and subsequently translated into English by the same writers in 1982.

The plot of the play revolves around the ownership of one and a half acres of land. The problem arises from the fact that the poor Kiguunda family indeed owns the land, yet the wealthy and Western-collaborating Kioi family attempts to seize it in order to build a factory. Furthermore, the children of these two households are having an affair and the Kiguunda family's daughter is pregnant, but the Kioi family refuses to allow the marriage to take place unless the Kiguundas are converted to Christianity, which complicates things. Thus, in order for the marriage to take place, the desperate Kiguunda family begins to imitate the Kioi family, that is, they try to Westernise themselves. The neighbours Gicaamba and Njooki, however, strive to warn the Kiguundas about this pro-Western family and educate them on imperialism. In short, the play emphasises the themes of unjust enrichment, forced impoverishment and civilising mission brought about by the new age, thus criticising imperialism, colonialism, and the new neo-colonial regime. In other words, "the play calls attention to the exploitation of the peasant people by foreign capitalists who collaborate with the Westernized Kenyan entrepreneurial class" (Killam and Kerfoot 151). The reactions to such exploitation are conveyed through each of the characters, as in *The Trial*, yet the

characters have dramatically distinct responses towards neo-colonial Kenya, as the play represents the postcolonial Kenya instead of the colonial Kenya in *The Trial*. Accordingly, *I Will Marry* illustrates the three stages of the development of Kenyan national culture as explained by Frantz Fanon.

Ngũgĩ, the co-author of both plays, experienced a significant shift in his life in 1977. He decided to reject his Christian name, James Ngũgĩ, and revive his birth name, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, displaying some sort of Africanisation, and this move paved the way for him to question his language choices in literature as a postcolonial writer (Nasta 328). In *Decolonising the Mind* (1986), he openly discusses his thoughts on language, stating that "[i]n my view language was the most important vehicle through which that power fascinated and held the soul prisoner. The bullet was the means of the physical subjugation. Language was the means of the spiritual subjugation" (9). Thus, it can be claimed that the initial reason he abandoned writing in English and started producing in Gikuyu was that he was refusing to be subjugated any longer. Another reason is that while working alongside African peasants and workers, learning native sayings from them, and writing both about and with them in KCECC, of which he is one of the founders, the common language immediately became Gikuyu (Thiong'o, "Ngugi wa Thiong'o in Conversation" 401). In other words, as he wanted to convey the real story of the sufferings of his fellow citizens from KCECC, Ngũgĩ felt compelled to return to the original language, and they, namely, Ngũgĩ and Ngũgĩ wa Mĩriĩ, with the help of peasants and workers, began to write *I Will Marry* in Gikuyu.

Simon Gikandi had the following comments to make about Ngũgĩ's shift from English to Gikuyu as his preferred language: "In his decision to write and produce *I Will Marry When I Want* in Gikuyu, Ngugi had finally begun to address an audience of workers and peasants who had served as central subjects in his novels and plays, but for whom his writing remained inaccessible as long as he continued to produce it in English" (264). Thus, Ngũgĩ realised a means to readily communicate with the audience he has always desired to reach. When all of the work was completed, the cast of peasant and worker actors performed the play's premiere at the Kamĩrĩĩthũ Community Education and Cultural Centre on 2 October 1977 (Thiong'o, *Penpoints* 67). The play was a success and

> [t]he Kamiriithu group demonstrated that Kenyan theatre could take place outside the confines of the National Theatre building. They converted the "empty space" at Kamiriithu into a "seeing place," thereby reconnecting Kamiriithu to performance traditions in African theater where the theatre was not a physical building but a space in which there were performers/actors and an audience. By performing for a mostly rural audience with low levels of literacy, Kamiriithu also redefined the audience for Kenya national theatre. (qtd. in Amoko 109-10)

This means that, officially, a new era for Kenyans and Kenyan theatre has begun with *I Will Marry*. Durrani as well speaks of the renewal, awakening, and empowerment that Kenyans and Kenyan theatre have experienced, stating that "[t]he popularity of songs and plays performed at the Kamiriithu Community Centre in 1977 once again showed that the Kenyan people had rejected the elite politics and culture promoted by the government but were in support of progressive content in politics, art and drama" (284–85). In other words, by virtue of *I Will Marry* and KCECC, Kenyans demonstrate that they can express their native culture and art despite restrictions.

Furthermore, *I Will Marry* sparked an upsurge of defiance. Therefore, not surprisingly, the more pleased the locals were with the theatre play—which was constructed with aforementioned peasants' and workers' help and addressed issues such as orature, their native tongue, the value of unity, concern for the land, and resistance against the British—the more frustrated the Kenyatta government was. The government's initial move was to cancel the play's licence, but they subsequently took a step further and detained the writers. Although, as mentioned above, Ngũgĩ wa Mĩriĩ was released after being detained, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o remained behind bars without even a trial for a whole year at Kamiti Maximum Security Prison from December 1977 to December 1978 (Gikandi and Wachanga 111-112). Ngũgĩ's detention order noted that "[he has] engaged in activities and utterances which are dangerous to the good Government of Kenya and its institutions" (Thiong'o, *Detained* 204). However, this does not justify his detention without trial, and he has every right to be upset about his detention because the "Rights of Arrested Persons" part of the fourth chapter of the Kenyan constitution, titled "Bill of Rights," contains the statement that "[a]n arrested person has the right [...] to be brought before a court as soon as reasonably possible, but not later than [...] twenty-four hours after being arrested" (*The Constitution*). As a consequence, his being detained is actually illegal. The only beneficial outcome of Ngũgĩ's detention is that while he was in prison, he decided that he "would continue writing in the very language

which had been the reason for [his] incarceration," and in this case, this language is Gikuyu (Thiong'o, "Ngugi wa Thiong'o in Conversation" 401).

Accordingly, even if it is unconstitutional, the Kenyatta government supports imprisoning a playwright for a year for criticising neo-colonial Kenya in a dissident Gikuyu play. In such a scenario, it is important that, actually, detention without trial "was introduced to Kenya by [the] racist settler minority, by Jesus-is-thy-Saviour missionaries, and their administrators," and it is "part of that colonial culture of fear" (Thiong'o, *Detained* 44). On top of that, though Jomo Kenyatta himself was imprisoned as a dissident by the British during the Mau Mau era, he imprisoned Ngũgĩ as a dissident by utilising British rules during his reign, as Ngũgĩ told the officer while in prison: "The British jailed an innocent Kenyatta. Thus, Kenyatta learnt to jail innocent Kenyans" (*Detained* 4). In other words, the performance of *I Will Marry* was so powerful in reviving the inspiring power of the Mau Mau movement that it was halted by quick and illegal restrictions, reminiscent of the Mau Mau times.

After Daniel arap Moi released Ngũgĩ from prison after Jomo Kenyatta's death in 1978, matters seemed to be getting better, but they swiftly got worse (Gikandi and Wachanga xvii). Daniel arap Moi, Kenya's second president and the country's longest-serving president with a twenty-four-year tenure, was not a quasi-dissident like Kenyatta; instead, he was always pro-British, which is why he continued the colonial regime's subjugation in the post-independence era without hesitation (Thiong'o, "Ngugi wa Thiong'o: Matigari as Myth and History: An Interview" 264). Moi not only pushed Ngũgĩ and Ngũgĩ wa Mĩriĩ out of work and forcibly banished them, but he also "brought three truckloads of armed policemen and razed the whole open-air theater to the ground" on March 12, 1982. Thus, as Ngũgĩ states, "the theater which was built with so much effort and love in 1977 is now no more, thanks to the armed policemen of the Kenyan neo-colonial regime" ("Ngugi wa Thiong'o" 200-201). Clearly, Moi devised an extreme measure to prohibit performances, exactly like the colonial authority did in the past. Indeed, Moi's influence has lasted so long that today, in 2023, Ngũgĩ is still "Professor of English and Comparative Literature for Writing and Translation at the University of California, Irvine," despite the fact that his entrance to Kenya is not prohibited (Innes 255). Ngũgĩ wa Mĩriĩ, on the other hand, unfortunately passed away in

Zimbabwe in 2008 after being exiled and attempting to launch a theatre enterprise there in 1982 (Ravengai and Seda 121). In this context, *I Will Marry* can be considered an important milestone in both Ngũgĩs' life.

As stated, since neither the neo-colonial Kenyatta government nor the neo-colonial Moi government would like the public to gain consciousness about neo-colonialism, the play that revealed the "evolutionary history of oppression in Kenya from foreign masters to native masters: how the future of Kenyan children was already hopelessly mortgaged by living Kenyan exploiters" was banned, and the playwrights of the play were detained and later sent to exile (Ukpokodu 32). In other words, the primary focus of *I Will Marry* is the native bourgeoisie who continue the colonial legacy. In the play, there are many instances in which the neo-colonial pro-Westerners executed on the locals what the colonial masters did to them during the colonial period. *I Will Marry*, similar to *The Trial*, represents Kenyan national culture, as proletarian natives use their own Kenyan Culture. Through their language, land and orature, they challenge the imposed Western values throughout the play.

There are several reasons why *The Trial* and *I Will Marry* have been chosen for their representation of the formation of Kenyan national culture in this thesis. *The Trial*, involving the struggle for independence, shows how the national culture formed prior to independence. *I Will Marry* shows how the national culture formed after independence was obtained. *The Trial* deals with the colonial period, i.e., the pre-independence years of Kenya. Moreover, the play itself is an embodiment of the colonial era in numerous aspects. It is written in the colonial language (i.e., English), it is performed in the coloniser-controlled Kenyan National Theatre and backed by some authorities (such as the state's invitation to write the play, the university's approval, and the festival's acceptance). Its performance was not banned in the first place except for the above-mentioned attempts, its actors are university-educated people, and its audience is elite. Evidently, it is a play that is compatible with the conditions and understanding of the colonial period (Thiong'o, *Penpoints* 67; Amoko 111–13). Apollo Obonyo Amoko claims that *The Trial* shows Kenyan national culture in a high cultural manner (103). *The Trial*, as a product of the colonial past, is an elite and Western-like play, in contrast to *I Will Marry*, because it does not suffer from publication and performance issues, and

it is written in English (Amoko 111). In other words, the national culture reflected in the play is presented to the audience through high culture mediums. However, it can be argued that the colonial features in *The Trial* illustrate the quest for Kenyan national culture, which began during the times of colonialism. The national culture depicted in *The Trial* is conveyed through high-culture mediums. However, the play's colonial features reflect the ongoing search for Kenyan national culture, which began during colonisation. Despite adopting a colonial language and theatrical techniques, the play effectively expresses Kenyan national culture and resistance. Blending colonial mediums with indigenous material demonstrates how national culture was created and asserted even within the limits of colonial frameworks.

I Will Marry, on the other hand, which might be considered the foil to *The Trial*, has revolutionary oppositional traits that portray the aftermath of colonialism and the emergence of neo-colonialism. Despite the fact that the two plays premiered only one year apart, practically all of the qualities of the second play are in sharp contrast to those of the first. In fact, these oppositions are attributable to the fact that *I Will Marry* has elements that oppose colonial values. For instance, *I Will Marry,* in contrast to *The Trial*, rejects the colonial language in favour of the Gikuyu language, paving the way for an authentic and first-hand transmission of Kenyan national culture. Furthermore, it is a product of fundamental transformations in which colonial concepts are rejected, such as Ngũgĩ's return to his native name and change of literary language. Other notable distinctions include the fact that the play was written and performed at the Kamĩrĩĩthũ Community Education and Cultural Centre, which was built by the peasant natives and the government was vehemently opposed to the play and imprisoned the playwrights. Moreover, the performers and the spectators were peasants and workers (Thiong'o, *Penpoints* 67; Amoko 113). *I Will Marry* thus represents the atmosphere of struggle against the plague of colonialism during the national liberation movement and post-independence times. Apollo Obonyo Amoko regards *I Will Marry* as "a milestone in the development of a truly national culture" because it "is thought to have captured the authentic culture of the marginalized and dispossessed of the Kenyan postcolony" (113). As Amoko suggests, the play has the status of a "peasant cultural" or "populist" representative of national culture in contrast to the "high cultural" interpretation of *The Trial* (111–13).

Consequently, in light of what has been discussed thus far regarding culture and national culture, particularly in the postcolonial context, Ngũgĩ's plays, *The Trial*, co-written with Mĩcere Gĩthae Mũgo, and *I Will Marry*, co-written with Ngũgĩ wa Mĩriĩ, demonstrate the existence and components of Kenyan national culture. These two plays represent the Mau Mau, Dedan Kimathi, Harambee, Land, Languages, Orature, and Theatre, as well as the culture during the decolonisation period. This thesis shows that Kenyan cultural development is consistent with Frantz Fanon's three different phases (i.e., assimilation, rejection, and revolution) in both plays.

Accordingly, the first chapter analyses *The Trial* as a pre-independence portrayal of Kenyan national culture, containing the seven components of Kenyan national culture and characters in the light of Fanon's three phases[7] that arose during the formation of national culture. It argues that in *The Trial*, the characters named the Second Soldier, Gatotia, Business Executive, Politician, and Priest, who betray their country and people's resistance for money despite being natives (Mũgo and Thiong'o 64–65), represent Fanon's first stage because they "have exchanged [their] own culture for another" (Fanon, *Wretched* 219). As for the second stage, the characters known as Boy and Girl, who have terrible experiences and complain about colonialism are initially unsure of what to do, later they decide to support Kimathi's cause and join the resistance (Mũgo and Thiong'o 42-62). Thus, Boy and Girl characters' understanding of national culture corresponds to Fanon's second stage, in which anti-colonial ideas begin to emerge and, and their native culture becomes increasingly significant. Woman character in *The Trial* expresses concern about colonialism and rejects it, attempting to awaken other colonised individuals (such as Boy and Girl) and supporting Kimathi in his fight (Mũgo and Thiong'o 18). She represents the third stage of the native intellectual and is a true revolutionary because of her anti-colonial stance and role as an awakener. Furthermore, as the title suggests, the third stage is also represented by Kimathi, who ends up in prison and even faces execution.

Furthermore, the first chapter argues that *The Trial*, as implied by its title and above-mentioned content, represents "Mau Mau" and "Dedan Kimathi," two elements of

[7] While Fanon's theory is primarily concerned with understanding the evolution of national culture under colonial rule, it may also be applied to character analysis in the play, as these characters represent various stages of the decolonisation process.

Kenyan national culture, as it describes Dedan Kimathi as an effective leader and the Mau Mau that he led as courageous. Furthermore, because this revolutionary mindset is reflected through theatre, the play itself serves as one of the elements of Kenyan national culture, "Theatre." Although the play was originally written in English, it incorporates many Kikuyu phrases and songs, demonstrating that it also represents the "Languages" and "Orature" components of Kenyan national culture (Mũgo and Thiong'o 4-10). In the play, there is an atmosphere of Kenyans united in a shared cause, which is the yearning for freedom during their Mau Mau rebellion, as the character Woman puts it,

> Let them honour
> the oath of unity
> Let them uphold
> the struggle for liberation
> from slavery, exploitation. (Mũgo and Thiong'o 74)

Clearly, through their struggle for land emancipation and the value they place on unification, the "Land" and "Harambee" elements of Kenyan national culture are represented in the play.

The second chapter analyses *I Will Marry*, which comprises the seven components of Kenyan national culture and characters symbolising the three stages in the post-independence context. It argues that the attitude of the pro-Western Kioi family in *I Will Marry* corresponds to Fanon's first stage, assimilation, since the Kioi family despises their own people, dress like the white man, practise the white man's religion, work for the white man, and even impose Western values on the Kiguunda family (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 42–49). As for the second stage, rejection, it claims that the attitude of the Kiguunda family in *I Will Marry* is the main example of Fanon's second stage because they abruptly return to their own religion after being influenced by the Kioi family and opting to convert to Christianity (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 73–75). Moreover, the second chapter claims that due to their anti-colonial stance and position as awakeners, since they fight against the Western ideals and try to reveal the Kioi family's ill intentions as they seek to awaken the Kiguunda family (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 32–41), Gicaamba and Njooki represent Fanon's third stage of the development of national culture in the colonised countries.

Additionally, the second chapter claims that because *I Will Marry* was originally composed in Gikuyu, the play reflects the "Language" aspect of Kenyan national culture. Although independence was achieved and the land was liberated from the British, the play portrays an atmosphere of economic hardship caused by pro-Western individuals who collaborate with the Westerners and control the economic monopoly, as Kiguunda points out,

> Our family land was given to homeguards.
> Today I am just a labourer
> On farms owned by Ahab Kioi wa Kanoru.
> My trousers are pure tatters.
> Look at you.
> See what the years of freedom in poverty
> Have done to you! (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 28–29)

However, they encourage one other by singing songs, recognising that they can overcome challenges collectively (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 28). As a result, their unification against the neo-colonial takeover of their lands using songs demonstrates that this play represents the "Land," "Harambee," and "Orature" components of Kenyan national culture. The play itself illustrates the "Theatre" element of Kenyan national culture, standing tall in the face of the abovementioned prohibition issues and having been performed over many years. The Mau Mau Guerrillas are one of the play's characters. They fight the British soldiers and sing the following victory song, which is a tribute to their leader, Dedan Kimathi: "When our Kimaathi ascended the mountains / He asked for strength and courage / To defeat the imperialist enemy" (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 70). Evidently, "Mau Mau" and "Dedan Kimathi," the last two components of Kenyan national culture, are also present in the play.

In conclusion, this thesis argues that Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's plays, *The Trial*, co-written with Mĩcere Gĩthae Mũgo, and *I Will Marry*, co-written with Ngũgĩ wa Mĩriĩ, demonstrate the components of Kenyan national culture, i.e., Mau Mau, Dedan Kimathi, Harambee, Land, Languages, Orature, and Theatre, and that the characters of these plays represent Fanon's three stages in the formation of national culture, i.e., assimilation, rejection, and revolution.

1. CHAPTER
NATIONAL CULTURE IN MAKING:

THE TRIAL OF DEDAN KIMATHI

"... colonialism is not a thinking machine, nor a body endowed with reasoning faculties. It is violence in its natural state, and it will only yield when confronted with greater violence." (Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* 61)

As stated in the Introduction, the thesis guiding this research is that the journey towards the establishment of a national culture in Kenya as represented in Ngũgĩ's works is dependent on the successful completion of assimilation and rejection, two early phases of nation building in the colonised countries as defined by Fanon. As Fanon argues, only when the native population has been through these stages can the revolutionary phase, which serves as a must for establishing a national culture, begin. With this approach, this chapter aims to analyse the representation of national culture in *The Trial* and identifies the characters that represent through their attitudes these critical three stages. It hence explores the actions, beliefs, and transformations of the characters, First Soldier, Second Soldier, Gatotia, Business Executive, Politician, Priest, Boy, Girl, Woman and Dedan Kimathi, and shows how they mirror the larger trajectory of colonial resistance in their development of a Kenyan national culture. By doing so, the chapter argues that *The Trial* expresses the elements of Kenyan national culture, and emphasises how cultural components such as Language, Land, Mau Mau, Dedan Kimathi and Harambee, Orature and Theatre are elements of Kenyan national culture in the making and illustrates the Fanonian stages of assimilation, rejection and revolution.

Although Kenyan writer and academic Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o is mostly known as a novelist and theorist, he is also a playwright of many ground-breaking plays such as *The Black Hermi*t (1968), *This Time Tomorrow* (1970), *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (1976), and *I Will Marry When I Want* (1977). As a matter of fact, Ngũgĩ is one of the initiators of the tradition cherishering the anti-colonial heroes "as an inspirational example for those who survive to create the new nation," in contrast to earlier examples of postcolonial writings (Boehmer, *Colonial* 172). For instance, in the play *The Trial*, which he wrote with his co-writer Mũgo, it is told how Dedan Kimathi, one of the

leaders of Kenyan independence war, the Mau Mau, who was found guilty and hanged according to the Special Emergency Regulations[8] fought against colonisation. The play also highlights the heroic leadership that Kimathi provided to the people (James 114). In the Preface, they voice the need for the Kenyans to acknowledge their anti-colonial heroes:

> [w]hy were our imaginative artists not singing songs of praise to [Kimathi, Koitalel, Me Kitilili, Mary Nyanjiru, Waiyaki (Kenyan heroes and heroines)] and their epic deeds of resistance? [...] There was no single historical work written by a Kenyan telling of the grandeur of the heroic resistance of Kenyan people fighting foreign forces of exploitation and domination. (Mũgo and Thiong'o Preface)

Therefore, what the playwrights do is to "draw on the collective memory of their people and privilege the rehabilitation of historical figures or heroes who are often demonized in official histories" (Okunoye 229). In other words, for the authors of *The Trial*, the first aim was to reconstruct the image of the hero that was somehow lost or was reluctant to be told before. To achieve this, after many years of domination, in order for the colonised people to collectively return to their allegedly tarnished culture, history and values; this culture, history and values had to be re-narrated by the native intellectuals. Thus, "[i]n a nationalist novel or play, such as Ngugi's *Matigari* (1986/1989), or *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (1976, written jointly with Micere Mugo), […] a story of anti-colonial heroism may be highlighted, elaborated, and made memorable; national triumphs can be underscored and praised" (Boehmer, *Colonial* 189).

Re-narrating the experiences or the history of the colonised serves a purpose beyond merely rectifying the historical representation of the heroic figures that the colonisers once despised. It is a fact that "[c]olonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and

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[8] After the Mau Mau uprising sparked and got out of control in 1952, the Kenyan colonial administration declared a state of emergency. The resulting Special Emergency Regulations expanded the list of offences for which the death penalty is applicable to include terrorist acts. These included being in connection with terrorists, taking an oath (relating to the Mau Mau oath), and possessing a firearm. The judges who objected to these regulations were replaced by new judges. The defendants were to be handled like criminals, not as political prisoners; the British were adamant. This led to the imprisonment of thousands of Mau Mau commanders and supporters in detention camps and the eventual execution of some (such as Dedan Kimathi). (Hynd 157)

destroys it" (Fanon, *Wretched* 210). Therefore, for the reconstruction of the national culture the history that has been distorted, disfigured, or destroyed by the coloniser must be precisely reconstructed in order to reclaim the lost past. That is, "[t]o confront the colonial project would require understanding the revolutionary struggle as a cultural struggle - as a struggle for the right to write [the colonised country's] own history. It meant rewriting history from the subaltern's perspective, which had been made invisible by colonial power" (Khan et al. 260).

In other words, aside from the fact that the heroes stated in the Preface by Ngũgĩ and Mũgo, were not praised or were demonised, colonial history was told in bits, with certain aspects, particularly the destruction of the native culture, imposition of the colonial culture and the nationalistic anticolonial efforts left untold, as was the case in Kenya. For instance, "[i]f one searches for the 'trial of Dedan Kimathi' in a range of search engines, one invariably finds not its archival record but the groundbreaking play *The Trial* by Kenyan authors Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Mĩcere Gĩthae Mũgo," since "the actual trial transcript [is not] available for academic and public examination" (MacArthur 5-6). Furthermore, when trial materials were requested for examination, the documents allegedly belonging to the trial in which Dedan Kimathi was convicted in 1956 featured the title "Republic of Kenya," despite the fact that there was no "Republic of Kenya" in 1956 (MacArthur 7). This implies that a Kenyan will be unable to find exact records of this crucial historical event that occurred during their fight for independence. Therefore, in this instance, preserving that history and passing it on to future generations necessitate a narrative describing the event. Accordingly, Ngũgĩ and Mũgo explain in the Preface:

> We agreed that the most important thing was for us to reconstruct imaginatively our history, envisioning the world of the Mau Mau and Kimathi in terms of the peasants' and workers' struggle before and after constitutional independence. The play is not a reproduction of the farcical 'trial' at Nyeri. It is rather an imaginative recreation and interpretation of the collective will of the Kenyan peasants and workers in their refusal to break under sixty years of colonial torture and ruthless oppression by the British ruling classes and their continued determination to resist exploitation, oppression and new forms of enslavement.

To put it another way, the second aim of the play was to portray and represent Kenya's lost cultural and historical heritage. Postcolonial narratives, particularly those from the early post-independence period, often contain historical narratives that highlight the

colonial history and advocate for independence (Boehmer, *Colonial* 187). Using this reasoning, historical narrative elements are available in *The Trial*, which was published thirteen years after independence. That is why, according to Okunoye, the play's genre is "historical play,"[9] as he states: "*The Trial* is a representative East African play which also provides a paradigm for the African historical play committed to interrogating received assumptions about Africans with regard to their historical heritage" and the play shows "what constitutes the true version of Kenyan history" (Okunoye 227).

Accordingly, *The Trial* revolves around the Mau Mau leader Kimathi and features a story that alternates between courtroom scenes and everyday life, intermingled with Kimathi's flashbacks from the Mau Mau Era. Ngũgĩ and Mũgo claim that Kimathi, as a character, represents the masses in the play (Preface), therefore he embraces the reader "as a spokesperson for the people's aspirations and their opposition to oppression" (Wamalva 16). In other words, Kimathi's experiences provide insight into the Kenyan peasants' struggle against imperialism and colonialism. Consequently, as Wamalva argues, the themes of the play are focused on "the loss of land, the loss of freedom [and] the institution of forced labour," to which local Kenyan peasants can relate (Wamalva 17). Moreover, the represented "enemy" in the play is more than just the Europeans, as there is a segment of natives who collaborates with the Europeans and thus is disliked (Wamalva 17). Therefore, the play's anti-colonial sentiment is furthered by the class divisions among the characters and the rural people's embrace, which both represent the state of Kenya at the time.

Fanon argues "[a] national culture in underdeveloped countries should […] take its place at the very heart of the struggle for freedom which these countries are carrying on" (Fanon, *Wretched* 233). Indeed, *The Trial* centres on Kenya's independence struggle, thus, it is possible to see the creation of Kenyan national culture in this play. Ngũgĩ states in his interview with Ingrid Björkman that

> [o]ut of the struggle for total liberation from imperialism there emerged a new national culture, rooted in the patriotic and heroic traditions of the peasantry. […] This national culture is in opposition to foreign imperialist exploitation and domination as well as to internal exploitation and oppression by a native ruling

[9] "[H]istorical drama *is* historical in the sense that it reflects something of the playwright and his era" (Hsiao, *The Eternal Present of the Past* 178).

> class in servile alliance with imperialism. ("Ngugi wa Thiong'o: Interview" 178-79)

Accordingly, an anti-colonial, patriotic, and revolutionary movement is required for the establishment of a liberated national culture. The characters of *The Trial* include both revolutionary peasant blacks and ruling classes (black and white), and those attempting to organise the revolution are voiceless and impoverished while the assimilationist upper classes, which promote imperialism, have a say in the administration of Kenya. Clearly, because of these distinctions in their attitudes to national culture, the characters illustrate Fanon's three different stages of assimilation, rejection, and revolution in the national culture building represented in *The Trial*.

Before getting into the character analysis in *The Trial*, it is critical to first examine the play's colonial setting. The strong racial disparities and biases between black and white characters emphasise not only the colonial system's ingrained inequalities, but also the diverse levels of complicity and resistance among the various groups. The black ruling class, which is frequently portrayed as participating in defending imperialist ideas, stands in stark contrast to the revolutionary black peasants who are oppressed and marginalised. This climate of discrimination and racial hierarchy provides context for understanding the characters' motivations and actions, as well as the play's larger themes. By foregrounding these dynamics, the play clearly depicts the oppressive colonial environment in which the battle for national culture and liberation takes place.

When a country is taken over by colonialists, it undergoes rapid transformation because the balance of power there shifts. Due to the new authority, the colonial power, two separate and opposing communities try to coexist in the same area. With an emphasis on economic inequalities, Fanon describes this new contrasting life as follows:

> This world divided into compartments, this world cut in two is inhabited by two different species. The originality of the colonial context is that economic reality, inequality, and the immense difference of ways of life never come to mask the human realities. … The cause is the consequence; you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich. (*Wretched* 39-40)

Clearly, as whites settle in the colony and take control of the local economy and native land, the financial gap between the colonisers and the colonised widens. The natives, who are deprived of the authority to manage their land and capital, become

impoverished in economic, political, and social areas; meanwhile, the masters who control those areas begin to become rich on the natives' land because "economic growth in one place operates through impoverishment elsewhere" (Young 51). In *The Trial,* the disparities in opportunities and social standing between natives and imperialist populations (white colonisers and pro-Western blacks) echo those contrasting lives during the colonial era.

In the chapter "Concerning Violence" of *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon makes a clear comparison between the areas where settlers and locals reside in a colonised country. According to him, "the settlers' town," where white people reside, is highly advanced and bright in terms of industrial, architectural, social, environmental, physical, nutritional, apparel, and financial elements; additionally, the opportunities available to the residents are perfect (39). Evidently, "the settlers' town" is depicted as one where everyone would want to dwell for many reasons. On the other hand, "the native town," where colonised people live, is unsuitable for human habitation, with all its industrial, nutritional, or architectural impossibilities, lack of development, and utmost despair (Fanon, *Wretched* 39). Thus, it is apparent that "the native town" is depicted as the polar opposite of "the settlers' town" in many ways, and the inhabitants in that place are deprived of many of the rights granted to whites.

The Trial illustrates this dualism, which regrettably persists because of these conflicting living conditions that promote duality in every facet of life, starting with social rank. For instance, the two groups that attend the trial are very distinct from one another and the physical and economic inequalities manifest themselves in the way these two groups arrive at the courtroom, as described in the stage directions: "*Whites enter, women dressed as if for a show, fanning their faces. Men swagger in with pistols belted around their waists. They sit on one side of the court. As the Africans enter, they should be a study in contrast with their torn clothes and tattered shoes*" (Mũgo and Thiong'o 23). The fact that white settlers dressed up to attend the trial of a black revolutionary leader demonstrates their financial affluence and how certain they are that the trial will go in their favour. Furthermore, white people wear firearms around their waists while black people are denied even the most basic clothing rights—the human equivalent of Fanon's industrial/underdeveloped dichotomy of two towns. Besides, considering the seating

arrangements, the stage directions specify the segregation as follows: "*In the court, blacks and whites sit on separate sides. It is as if a huge gulf lies between them*" and "*Whites occupy more comfortable seats on the opposite side*" (Mũgo and Thiong'o 23, 3). The fact that white people can sit in more comfortable seats and that there is a "gulf" between these two groups reflects Fanon's idea of "world cut in two" (*Wretched* 39). Also, Gikandi claims that "[t]here is a remarkable spatial transition in the symbolic economy of the theatrical space itself: at the beginning of the play, […] the court is organized around what Fanon has popularized as the Manichean [(dualistic)] allegory of colonial geography" (180). Accordingly, it appears that the unfairness is mirrored in the courtroom in a way that benefits whites since "all of the state institutions, including the civil service, the constitution, law enforcement and the judiciary, were structured to oppress the masses and to serve the interests of the colonial government" (Kalu 27).

Fanon argues that during the time of decolonisation, the coloniser and the colonised's "first encounter was marked by violence and their existence together—that is to say the exploitation of the native by the settler—was carried on by dint of a great array of bayonets and cannons" (*Wretched* 36). Thus, whenever colonists and colonised people coexist in a given setting, these two radically different groups exhibit hostility towards one another and, when required, use force. For instance, in *The Trial*, after the clerk in the courtroom warns both sides to be silent, one of the colonists grabs the clerk's collar and states, "How dare you?" and as a response the clerk says, "I'm sorry, sir, I'm sorry sir! … I was telling them, sir … not you. God above, not you" (Mũgo and Thiong'o 23). Cleary, the courtroom is sitting on a powder bomb, with both groups prepared to attack one another, and the fact that whites carry firearms in the courtroom while blacks challenge whites with simple body movements highlights the power imbalance in a colonial atmosphere. The crucial irony is that this incident happens in the courtroom where Dedan Kimathi is being tried for violating the Special Emergency Regulations by carrying a firearm (Mũgo and Thiong'o 24). In other words, in a courtroom where the offence of carrying a gun is being tried, a settler who is not a police officer or a soldier openly exhibits his pistol and threatens the officers. Clearly, a government clerk can be easily attacked by a white man in a courtroom on the black man's land, and the clerk would just feel terrified of him and apologise in return. All these examples demonstrate how discriminatory and oppressive the colonial administration in Kenya is in *The Trial*.

The colonial administration openly approves that whites either revoke blacks' rights or grant themselves rights that blacks have never owned. Memmi summarises the unjust condition in the colonies, where whites were favoured, as follows:

> A foreigner, having come to a land by the accidents of history, he has succeeded not merely in creating a place for himself but also in taking away that of the inhabitant, granting himself astounding privileges to the detriment of those rightfully entitled to them. And this not by virtue of local laws, which in a certain way legitimize this inequality by tradition, but by upsetting the established rules and substituting his own. He thus appears doubly unjust. He is a privileged being and an illegitimately privileged one; that is, a usurper. (53)

Thus, the white man builds and sustains his life in a country that is not even his own, enjoying more privilege than even the highest authority of that country. Of course, the white settler does not do this on his own; he makes use of law enforcement agencies such as the police and the soldier he brings with him, as well as the local forces with whom he collaborates, to serve himself and the colonial system. As Fanon states, "[i]n the colonies it is the policeman and the soldier who are the official, instituted go-betweens, the spokesmen of the settler and his rule of oppression" (*Wretched* 38). In other words, the control exercised by law enforcement maintains the settlers' domination in the country, as they constitute a repressive state apparatus[10] comprised of both white and black authorities who impose colonial power. In *The Trial*, for instance, white people enter the courtroom without having to go through security control with pistols around their waists, whereas black people "are frisked by the African soldiers under Waitina's [a white police officer] orders" (Mũgo and Thiong'o 23). This circumstance reflects Fanon's stage of assimilation, in which a black soldier or police officer becomes indistinguishable from a white counterpart by blindly obeying commands and perpetuating a system that benefits the colonisers. According to Fanon, such people have internalised the values of colonial power to the point where they enforce the colonial system's repressive rules against their own people (Fanon, *Wretched* 218-19). By inflicting punishments solely on the black population, these assimilated officers reinforce the very systems of colonial supremacy that they should

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[10] Institutions where the state employs physical force to uphold law and order are referred to as Repressive State Apparatus. This includes the government, armed forces, police, courts, and jail system—all of which rely heavily on coercion to function. (Althusser, *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* 126)

be opposing, thereby supporting the repressive state apparatus that sustains the settlers' power.

In the play, there is another law enforcement officer known as the Second Soldier from The King's African Rifles (KAR)[11], who is truly ready to become a white soldier after publicly absorbing the ideas of the white man. In the play, KAR soldiers, commanded by white police officials, search the streets for Mau Mau sympathisers, whose commander is captured. Waitina, a white police officer, orders the African soldiers: "Askari, cover the streets well and shoot down at bloody terrorists" (Mũgo and Thiong'o 6). In response, the First Soldier "*shows no enthusiasm*," while the Second Soldier exclaims, "Ndio Afande![12]" (Mũgo and Thiong'o 6). This eagerness to acknowledge Mau Mau supporters as terrorists and to kill them reflects the colonisers' mindset, since the British regarded Dedan Kimathi as a villain, Mau Mau as bestial, and Mau Mau supporters as barbarians (Okunoye 230; Reynolds 157). Later in the play, the First and Second Soldiers start talking while searching for the Mau Maus[13], and the First Soldier argues that there are no terrorists in the town, that they are wandering around aimlessly and harming innocent people, and that the whole thing is ludicrous (Mũgo and Thiong'o 12). The Second Soldier becomes enraged by these ideas and begins discussing the need to end the Mau Mau revolt. As he states,

> [t]heir bloody Kimathi is appearing in court at Nyeri today. This afternoon. He is going to get a proper court trial. Not like the jungle ones he used to stage in the forest. See how fair *mzungu*[14] is? […] [L]et me tell you, after the trial, after Kimathi is hanged, there will be no more fighting. It will be the end of this bloody struggle. Mzungu! Don't play with him. (Mũgo and Thiong'o 12-13)

However, the Second Soldier's claims contradict each other, indicating that he accepts the white man's ideas without questioning them. As stated, this case is being tried because Kimathi was caught in possession of a weapon of some sort. The fact that the Emergency Regulations were established by the colonisers, who are allowed to sit comfortably and legally with firearms in court, indeed emphasises the fundamental unfairness perpetuated by the "mzungu." Secondly, the soldier claims that "a proper

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[11] The British colonial government in East Africa established the King's African Rifles (KAR), an army whose battalions are made up of African soldiers under the leadership of British officers. (Moyse-Bartlett 139)

[12] "Yes, sir!" (Katrak, *Dramaturg Notes* 4)

[13] The term is generally used both for the Movement and the sympathisers themselves.

[14] "Refers to any white person; or an outsider" (Katrak, *Dramaturg Notes* 4)

court trial" will be conducted. This suggests a facade of a democratic trial, yet it is evident that the true intention is to execute Kimathi. Furthermore, the Second Soldier's enthusiasm to put down the Mau Mau rebellion demonstrates the British government's determination to repress the movement. Since Kimathi's captivity and execution, as well as Mau Mau's dissolution, were the goals of the British authorities, as Dr. Basavaraj Naikar puts it, "[t]he British government wants to suppress the Mau Mau Movement, but the native peasants and ordinary people, who are awakened patriots, try to oppose the alien government in various ways" (27). It turns out that this soldier, who internalised the white master's ideals and wanted the Mau Mau, Kenyans' war for independence, to be over, was content with the British presence in Kenyan land.

According to Memmi, "[b]y this step [assimilation], which actually presupposes admiration for the colonizer, one can infer approval of colonization" and it is apparent in the Second Soldier (165). In other words, the Second Soldier simply wishes to be like the colonists rather than the natives or the other. In fact, during their conversation with the First Soldier, when the First Soldier mentions Kimathi as a significant leader for the people, the Second Soldier responds, "[y]ou are talking like one of them, man" (Mũgo and Thiong'o 13). At this point, it is clear that Second Soldier employs the "'us/them' dichotomy," which reflects the "colonialist discourse" (Burney 180) and "he has assumed all the accusations and condemnations of the colonizer, that he is becoming accustomed to looking at his own people through the eyes of their procurer" (Memmi 167). As a result, because the Second Soldier supports the white man above his own people, he no longer belongs in the same category as the other natives, and he becomes alienated and disconnected from both his nation and his people. Thus, in Fanon's theory, he represents the assimilation stage, in which the native embraces the coloniser's opinions and customs, thereby inhibiting the development of Kenya's true national culture.

As the play comes to an end and Kimathi still refuses to acknowledge his supposed crimes, it becomes clear that his destiny is predetermined. The court rules that he should be executed. The officer who captured Kimathi, Shaw Henderson[15], makes him a final

[15] Ian Henderson, a British officer, apprehended Dedan Kimathi in 1956. In his work *The Hunt for Kimathi*, Henderson expresses his critical sentiments regarding Kimathi and Mau Mau. He is opposed to

visit in his cell, hinting that he will be put to death. The Second Soldier finds this very funny and bursts into giggles (Mũgo and Thiong'o 54). Henderson then starts torturing[16] Kimathi, and the Second Soldier and Gatotia comply willingly and without hesitation, helping to carry various torture implements, physically dragging Kimathi to the designated area for his torment, roughly removing Kimathi's shirt and laying him down (Mũgo and Thiong'o 55-56). This behaviour serves as an example of how the Second Soldier and Gatotia lose their humanity; they show an intense animosity for another African person to the point of supporting and taking part in acts of torture. Even though he is African, the Second Soldier mimics the language and mindset of the colonial rulers by calling his fellow Africans "[t]hese natives," as Henderson also labels Dedan Kimathi a "black native" (Mũgo and Thiong'o 12, 56). This indicates that he perceives his own people as inferior, mirroring the views held by white colonisers. His identity is completely distorted, and he becomes an exact copy of his colonial masters, taking on their ideas and approach to life. Fanon exemplifies the assimilated native in his *Black Skins, White Masks* (1952) as:

> Every colonized people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle. In the French colonial army, and particularly in the Senegalese regiments, the black officers serve first of all as interpreters. They are used to convey the master's orders to their fellows, and they too enjoy a certain position of honor. (9)

The Second Soldier exemplifies these by successfully assimilating into British culture, embracing his master's superiority and his own inferiority, and thoroughly embodying the British mindset.

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the entire Kenyan independence movement as he presents Kimathi as a fearful leader, remarks on how primitive the Mau Mau struggle is, and compares the Mau Mau fighters to animals. The playwrights chose the name Shaw Henderson to represent Ian in *The Trial*. The character is given multiple roles in the play, including prosecutor and judge. (Bani-Khair and Khawaldeh 144)

[16] Considering the historical similarity of this occurrence in the play, it should be emphasised that the British government openly admitted in July 2012 that torture had been carried out by colonial officials in Kenya during the time of emergency. About 900 Kenyans lost their lives because of the death sentence being applied to ordinarily minor offences like gun possession or selling arms due to state of emergency regulations. (Reynolds 138-151)

Kimathi is also aware of the fact that the Second Soldier in the play is an assimilated soldier, or that KAR troops are generally assimilative. While Henderson tortures Kimathi in his cell, Gatotia and two African KAR soldiers—known as the First and Second Soldiers—stand by. As Kimathi writhes in pain, he accuses the men of betraying their own people for selfish gains, such as personal comfort, a place at the coloniser's table, or even a business partnership that ultimately serves to exploit and oppress their fellow Africans. He condemns them as traitors to their people, driven by greed for medals and scraps, and warns that their people will never forget their betrayal (Mũgo and Thiong'o 57-58). Evidently, the cultural assimilation of the Kenyans is betrayal according to Kimathi. While battling for his nation's independence, Kimathi is taken prisoner and subjected to torture by a white police officer. However, he harbours a deeper sense of betrayal and resentment towards the African forces who serve white people and watch his moments of torture. Affiah and Eni argue that "[t]he playwrights have aesthetically used the four trials of Dedan Kimathi to show that there are enemies of the people who will discourage the revolution by either betrayal [(from the blacks)] or threats [(from the whites)]" (68).

To put it differently, "Kimathi has to fight two kinds of enemies: (i) the foreign rulers; (ii) his own countrymen who act as traitors by collaborating with the white man. […] The internal enemy i.e. KAR soldiers are more dangerous than the external enemy i.e. British Soldiers" (Naikar 23-24). Thus, the KAR soldiers provide a greater difficulty as enemies because of their dual betrayal caused by assimilation; as Kenyans, they adapt and exhibit behaviours identical to those of British soldiers. When these aspects are considered, the Second Soldier's and Gatotia's attitudes are similar to the attitudes included in Fanon's concept of the first-stage, the assimilationist native. As the assimilated natives, the Second Soldier and Gatotia have internalised colonial principles and shown no resistance to hegemonic regimes that seek to subjugate and dehumanise their fellow citizens. Fanon further argues that "[i]n colonized countries, colonialism, after having made use of the natives on the battlefields, uses them as trained soldiers to put down the movements of independence. The ex-service associations are in the colonies one of the most anti-nationalist elements which exist" (*Wretched* 232). Fanon's point about the psychological and cultural impact of colonialism is exemplified by the

play's portrayal of the Second Soldier, who becomes a tool of the occupiers, enabling the erosion of native selfhood and patriotism.

Apart from the Second Soldier and Gatotia, other black characters that display assimilationist tendencies are the Business Executive, Politician, and Priest. In an effort to convince Kimathi to put a stop to the revolt, they claim that they have won the war since the British told them that they will now permit black people to own land, abolish discrimination, and bestow independence on a region-by-region basis (Mũgo and Thiong'o 45). Kimathi rejects these arguments, claiming they represent a colonial perspective and support white supremacist ideas. The Business Executive's Englishman-like dress, in addition to their ideological positions, emphasises their absorption by colonial ideals and support for preserving colonial dominance (Mũgo and Thiong'o 44). Despite their best efforts to look friendly to Kimathi and to be defenders of liberation, during his last trial, the Business Executive, Politician, and Priest expose their true colours by sitting on the white side of the courtroom rather than the black side.

A good example of Bhabha's theory of mimicry that the colonised other becomes "almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha 127) is the placement of the Business Executive, Politician, and Priest on a bench at the back of the courtroom while the white people are seated properly (Mũgo and Thiong'o 79). This shows how their attempts to imitate the colonisers only serve to emphasise their innate subordination and demonstrate the fact that they will never be able to fully be equal with the white man. Also as Memmi puts it, "[i]n order to be assimilated, it is not enough to leave one's group, but one must enter another; now he meets with the colonizer's rejection. [...] He can never succeed in becoming identified with the colonizer, nor even in copying his role correctly" (168). Thus, the assimilated characters represent a shallow copy of the white man's culture in their attempts to reproduce the coloniser's attributes and ideas. In doing so, they produce a national culture as Fanon's concept of the assimilationist native represents. They are people with no culture of their own who, in their attempt to identify with colonial power structures, eventually forsake their own sense of self and become simply shadows of the oppressors they wish to resemble.

On the other hand, not all characters in the play serve the assimilationist cultural reconstruction. Some characters such as the First Soldier reject the colonial culture and

rule. Despite being a KAR soldier, and Kimathi believing he is a traitor, the First Soldier, for instance, acts differently from an assimilationist native. As stated, despite being a KAR like Second Soldier, the First Soldier does not approach the instructions of the white officers with the same passion or understanding; rather, the orders seem more illogical to him than they do to the Second Soldier. While the two soldiers search for terrorists on the streets, the First Soldier begins a long process of questioning the events; killing people seems absurd to him and he begins to realize the flaws of the British administration (Mũgo and Thiong'o 12-13). The following conversation shows the difference of opinion and attitude of the First Soldier, as the Second Soldier states, "Angry mothers who have lost their husbands and children might want to tear that beastly Kimathi to pieces!" and First Soldier responses, "That's what Bwana Shaw Henderson says. But he doesn't know the people. Kimathi is a hero to the people. They love him like anything, say what you will" (Mũgo and Thiong'o 13). Thus, "[t]he first soldier counters … remarks," that present Kimathi as the enemy of the people as a whitest strategy and begins to question the authority and its acts (Magel 241).

Moreover, when the First Soldier and the Second Soldier are assigned to kill terrorists on the streets, the First Soldier believes that there are no terrorists and that they are causing harm to innocent villagers rather than terrorists, and then he has an epiphany and says, "[t]he way mzungu makes us thirst to kill one another!" (Mũgo and Thiong'o 12). He even gets accused of speaking like a native by his partner (Mũgo and Thiong'o 13). Consequently, instead of being a law enforcement officer serving the white people and enforcing colonialism, the First Soldier starts acting more like a native person attempting to fit in with his people. He, that is, becomes a rejectionist native in Fanon's terms. Fanon characterises the transition from being an assimilationist to becoming a rejectionist native as the failure of the colonial authorities (*Wretched* 222). Dissenting thoughts become particularly serious for the First Soldier when he is exposed to a physical violence scene. When Henderson enters Kimathi's cell to torment him, the Second Soldier laughs while the First Soldier "*wears a sad, serious face*" (Mũgo and Thiong'o 54). When the torment starts, the Second Soldier carries out his orders with fidelity; for instance, he takes Kimathi to the place of torture so that he receives severe treatment. The First Soldier, "(*maddened by the violence, whispers to his companion*): Are you a human being? What are you doing this for?" (Mũgo and Thiong'o 56). In

other words, the First Soldier, who serves in the enemy's (British) army and can be considered assimilated, begins to feel uneasy about the British instructions, hesitates to kill Kenyans, his fellow nationals, and becomes concerned by the brutal behaviour of the British. According to Fanon, during their transition from assimilation to rejection, the natives that are

> standing face to face with [their] country at the present time, and observing clearly and objectively the events of today throughout the continent which [they want] to make [their] own, the intellectual is terrified by the void, the degradation, and the savagery he sees there. Now he feels that he must get away from the white culture. He must seek his culture elsewhere, anywhere at all. (*Wretched* 218-219)

To put it another way, the First Soldier experiences the transformation or transition necessary for the development of the native national culture. His desire to return to his own black culture and to quit serving against his own people in the army founded by white people place him in the position of a native moving from the first to the second stage of the cultural development defined by Fanon.

The second-stage native thus places himself next to the people of his country and is prepared to be counted among "his own barbarous people" rather than among the white men; this is because he wants to overcome the conflict he is in—both serving the white people and harming his country and its citizens, and loving his country and its citizens (Fanon, *Wretched* 217-218). The First Soldier's reintegration into his native community is eloquently depicted at the final scene of Kimathi's trial, which results in a death sentence. The courtroom, loaded with noticeable tension, transforms into a place of collective resistance as the people, initiated by the characters Boy and Girl, join in a strong chorus, "*singing a thunderous freedom song*," asserting that Kimathi's ideas will never die and "[*a*]*ll the soldiers are gone, except for the First Soldier who shyly joins in the singing from behind*" (Mũgo and Thiong'o 84). This moment symbolises more than just a collective act of defiance; it is a moment of a deep cultural and political awakening. Despite his position in the colonial military establishment, the First Soldier symbolically returns to his people and cultural roots. His hesitant but crucial act of joining the collective singing indicates that he yearns to escape the imposed identity of being only a tool of colonial authority and be a man of his own culture. Thus, Frantz Fanon's second-stage native, who rejects the colonialist identification and is now looking for a position within the native culture, is represented by The First Soldier. His

yearning to be accepted by his own community instead of receiving validation or acceptance from white people illustrates a return to his cultural origins and the innate need for determining one's identity and a sense of belonging through the development of one's own culture.

An additional important shift in the play is represented by the characters Boy and Girl[17]. At first portrayed as desperate and upset people, they show loyalty to their country but lack an extensive knowledge of its cultural and historical nuances. Throughout the play, they gain a better understanding of their country and their hero, Dedan Kimathi. By the end of the play, they have advanced to the point where they can effectively mobilise the masses, as indicated in their initiation of the chanting in the final scene. Their transition from simply preserving their cultural heritage to actively participating in revolutionary leadership mirrors the shift from the second-stage rejectionist native, who seeks to align with their people but remains limited to rejection of colonialism, to the third-stage revolutionary native, as described by Frantz Fanon, who stimulates the people and drives the struggle for liberation. This progression highlights a significant shift in their role, from resistance to active leadership and empowerment in the fight for national culture.

Boy, a nameless character in *The Trial*, has experienced extreme poverty and hardship. His mother died after childbirth, he and his father moved to Nairobi and rented a small room. Boy's predicament worsened when his father passed away from haemorrhage after losing his fingers in a work-related accident and receiving no support from his employers. Boy had no money after this catastrophe, was kicked out of the rented room, and was so starving that he had to search bins for food. After his father died, he was

[17] Nameless figures like Boy, Girl, and Woman are used in *The Trial* to effectively symbolise the collective struggles of the Kenyan people. Magel notes that Boy and Girl represent Kenya's lost youth and the disillusionment of the younger generation with colonial governance (240). In a similar vein, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o highlights the political significance of the female figure, proposing that political liberation in Africa depends on African women's full political consciousness and saying that "the woman figure is a symbol for these potentialities in the Kenyan and African women" ("We" 141–142). Thus, these characters, which stand in for larger social groups and all the lost youth and repressed women of colonial-era Kenya, are not separate individuals. The fact that these figures are anonymous emphasises their universal significance in representing the people's struggle and assures that they stand for the revolutionary potential and collective culture of the Kenyan people as well as for themselves.

deported from Nairobi during Operation Anvil[18]. Although not specifically mentioned, it is understood that his expulsion was due to his involvement in Mau Mau militancy, which led to his eventual relocation to Nyeri. His living situation is still substandard, which causes him to argue with the character named Girl over money (Mũgo and Thiong'o 17-19). Significant adversities also befall the character, Girl. She experienced harassment by the headmaster, who made her leave school. She then started working as a tea picker for a white employer, who mistreated and punished her often. She ran away from abusive men and has battled to establish a stable life for herself, yet she is still struggling with life (Mũgo and Thiong'o 41).

During a furious argument about money given to them while working for a white man, the characters Boy and Girl encounter a character known as Woman. Woman steps in, witnesses their argument, and commands them to stop fighting. She then delivers a critical lecture, challenging their behaviour and objectives. For example, she asks directly, "[s]o you decided to beat her? And you would have killed her because of five shillings—given you by a mzungu?" (Mũgo and Thiong'o 17). She further states, "[i]nstead of fighting against one another, we who struggle against exploitation and oppression, should give one another strength and faith till victory is ours" (60). Woman thus emphasises the continuous influence of colonialism on interactions among natives, as well as the importance of the colonised people coming together and exchanging ideas. She in a way voices the need for solidarity for the Kenyans to develop their own culture and identity. Through making them realise the real cause of their fight and highlighting the idea of "harambee," Woman's intervention subverts the coloniser's divide-and-rule tactic by promoting solidarity and collective endeavour as a means of opposing colonial dominance and developing as a unified strong nation.

Boy and Girl view Woman as an authoritative figure with knowledge about the true potential of the colonised people and the importance of Kimathi for their independence. They ask her many questions concerning the rebellion and the personality of Dedan Kimathi. In doing so, they mythologise and glorify Kimathi, attributing to him extraordinary abilities and feats. Boy speaks of rumours that Kimathi could transform

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[18] The British, particularly General Erskine, conducted a large surround and search of Nairobi to catch and relocate Mau Mau militants on 24th April 1954. (Van der Bijl 143)

into an aeroplane or sneak into enemy territory to sound a bugle from within. Girl adds that he could crawl for miles on his belly or laugh without being heard by enemies (Mũgo and Thiong'o 61-62). Their enquiries reveal a desire to comprehend the complexity of the revolutionary struggle, particularly as symbolised by the figure of Dedan Kimathi, who is exalted to a mythological status in the play. This discussion emphasises the role of mythmaking in the creation of revolutionary identity and the conveyance of cultural heritage through oral literature.

The fact that Boy and Girl ask about such myths implies that they have previously heard these stories about Kimathi, indicating the presence of a native oral culture in the native society. Evidently, such myths are common among the natives, and they bring them together and encourage them to embrace their own cultural values. Moreover, according to Memmi, the native between the assimilation and revolution stage, by "[a]ssigning attention to the old myths, giving them virility, … regenerates them dangerously" (177). These myths inspire the characters Boy and Girl to re-energise their dedication to the rebellion and the plan to free Mau Mau commander Dedan Kimathi from prison. By doing so, individuals engage with myths in a "dangerous" way, using them as a motivator for action.

Their aspiration to save Kimathi from prison indicates their loyalty to their homeland, rejection of colonial forces, and preparedness for revolution, uniting them with the Kenyan's revolutionary consciousness. As E. A. Magel argues, "[t]hey use the folk beliefs about [Kimathi] as inspiration to bolster their own resolve and overcome their weaknesses" (244). In this context, the characters' involvement in myths is not passive, but active and transformational. Such myths help them transcend from the rejectionist to the revolutionary stage. By actively engaging with these myths, Boy and Girl progress from simply rejecting colonial values to a more transformative stage in which they are inspired to take concrete revolutionary action, aligning themselves with the larger struggle for liberation and embodying the revolutionary consciousness described by Fanon.

In fact, Woman in a way teaches Boy to become revolutionist and protect his own culture. Boy and Woman have an extensive chat, during which Boy reveals his turbulent past. Recognising Boy's state of confusion and despair, Woman makes an encouraging

and galvanising speech, stating: “The day you understand why your father died: the day you ask yourself whether it was right for him to die so; the day you ask yourself: ‘What can I do so that another shall not be made to die under such grisly circumstances?’ that day, my son, you’ll become a man” (Mũgo and Thiong’o 19). This statement not only emphasises the importance of confronting the consequences of personal loss within the larger framework of systematic injustice, but it also acts as a catalyst for Boy’s transformation. The topic easily moves to Dedan Kimathi’s upcoming trial, which becomes the central point of their conversation. Woman quickly informs Boy of the critical situation, emphasising the urgency of the task at hand. She asks if he would be willing to undertake a mission for Kimathi, to which Boy passionately responds that he would give anything for such a cause. Woman, however, reminds him that actions speak louder than words. Determined, Boy asserts his readiness and expresses his resolve to attend Kimathi’s trial, eager to witness the proceedings firsthand (Mũgo and Thiong’o 21-22). Boy’s reaction, expressing that he would give anything, demonstrates his deep devotion to the cause and his understanding of the seriousness of the situation. His subsequent declaration of being ready indicates his willingness to accept responsibilities and make sacrifices for the sake of the revolution. This scene represents a dramatic transformation in Boy’s self-image from unconscious subject of colonial oppression to a vital actor in the struggle for justice and independence. Magel argues that after this exchange, “[r]ecognizing the oppressive environment in which he has lived and his own participation in its continuation, boy commits himself to active involvement in the revolutionary struggle” (244).

Accordingly, Woman gives Boy and Girl the responsibility of delivering a loaf of bread to the Fruitseller standing near the prison (Mũgo and Thiong’o 21). Unknown to them, the loaf contains a secret firearm meant to facilitate Kimathi’s escape. After Woman leaves, Boy and Girl continue their fight, during which the bread loaf tumbles, revealing the hidden gun. This finding surprises them and immediately redirects their focus, making them realise the importance of their task (Mũgo and Thiong’o 41-43). When they arrive at the prison, they discover that the Fruitseller is not around, which discourages Boy and causes him to consider cancelling their assignment. Girl, on the other hand, is solid and relentless in her efforts to elevate Boy’s mood and reaffirm his dedication. Girl’s dedication and her efforts to mobilise Boy is overt, she insists that

they take matters into their own hands and carry out a plan to rescue Kimathi, despite Boy's initial reluctance. Girl emphasises the urgency of the situation, reminding him of the call to action that Woman had spoken about, pushing him to recognise the importance of this moment. Boy, reflecting on Woman's words, begins to see them as a challenge to his inner resolve and maturity. He eventually agrees that they must rescue Kimathi, though he is initially unsure how to proceed. Girl then suggests a plan to smuggle a gun to Kimathi inside a loaf of bread, allowing him to fight his way out of prison (Mũgo and Thiong'o 52).

By now, it is evident that Girl has advanced to the third stage, in which, according to Fanon, rather than simply identifying with or sustaining their cultural tradition, the native acts as a change agent, motivating and mobilising the community (*Wretched* 222-23). Instead of praising quiet acceptance of injustice, the revolutionary native serves as a wake-up call, instilling a strong yearning for freedom. This time is notable for the rise of revolutionary literature that embraces the spirit of resistance and action. Girl exemplifies this transition by actively encouraging and guiding others, including Boy, and playing an important role in organising the colonised people to fight for liberation. Her acts are consistent with Fanon's concept of a revolutionary leader who, despite challenges, emerges as a voice for their country, articulating collective desires and developing an alternative reality.

The next day, Boy and Girl try to sneak back into the prison under the guise of Maasai. Despite their best efforts, they fall short again. Then they meet Fruitseller and immediately go to him to give him the bread. Unknown to them, the Fruitseller is Woman disguised as a Fruitseller. Woman, uninformed of Boy and Girl's intention to show up disguised as Maasai, is shocked by their appearance. After finding out each other's disguises, Boy and Girl enquire about Woman's motivation for concealing herself. In response, Woman teaches the young revolutionaries a valuable lesson about how to be flexible when faced with unexpected circumstances when conducting the resistance. She emphasises that one needs to be ready to adjust their strategy in light of how the conflict is changing. After that, she clarifies the risks that are part of their mission, which sparks an important conversation between them, as Girl asks, "What are you now going to do? You, alone?" and Woman responds with "I am not alone. You are

there!" (Mũgo and Thiong'o 60). Then, Girl's resolute assertion, "I am ready," and Boy's matching attitude, "I too am ready!" (Mũgo and Thiong'o 60) mark a shift into the revolutionary stage, in which natives accept their positions as active participants in the war.

Boy and Girl's determination to act, despite the lack of a defined plan, demonstrates a dedication to the revolutionary cause and a desire to face colonial power. According to Okunoye, "while the glorification of Kimathi is central to the intention and design of the play, there is also an effort to project the determination of the people he represents. This is where the notion of collective heroism becomes relevant" (233). This concept of collective heroism is consistent with Fanon's understanding of the revolutionary stage, which emphasises the importance of collective struggle and social resistance in shaping national culture (*Wretched* 233). In this context, the play depicts the people's determination and collective heroism, demonstrating their active engagement in the revolutionary struggle. It validates Fanon's theory that national culture in this stage is moulded by people's concerted efforts to resist oppression and achieve liberation, reflecting a collective awareness that drives the fight for freedom. Magel further suggests that accepting Woman's offer to complete a task for Kimathi constitutes Boy and Girl's transformation into national heroes ready to do their best to develop their own national culture as follows:

> [T]hey are the only characters who undergo any substantial change in the play. … [t]he youths leave their animalistic, individualistic, self-centered world and enter a world dedicated to self-sacrifice for the good of others. This metaphoric movement from childhood to adulthood changes the youths' behavior and attitude. No longer do they fight with each other for themselves but together they risk their lives for the ultimate defeat of the colonial system. (244)

Boy and Girl's transformation from a condition of immaturity and self-interest to one of political understanding and dedication to the revolutionary cause is, in fact, one of the key concepts of the play. Woman's response, "I am not alone. You are there!" recognises the collective aspect of the resistance and serves as a catalyst for the youths' change. Woman not only recognises the presence and readiness of Boy and Girl, but also pushes them to realise their revolutionary potential. Her introspective tone reflects a thoughtful appreciation of the movement's bigger goals and the importance of teamwork. However, while Magel claims that Boy and Girl are the only characters who

change significantly, in fact, the First Soldier, too moves from the first stage—marked by passive acceptance of colonial rule—to the second stage, marked by a fresh sense of disobedience and challenging of the coloniser.

The actual shift in the characteristics of Boy and Girl occurs in the final courtroom scene of the play. As they prepare to attend Dedan Kimathi's final trial, alongside Woman, potentially in order to organise a prison break, they totally commit to the revolutionary cause. Boy and Girl arrive to witness the trial, grabbing Kimathi's attention as he observes their presence and watches them take their seats; the overall atmosphere in the courtroom is tense, with almost every character present. This scene depicts a sense of togetherness and leadership, implying that Kimathi acts as a leader for Boy and Girl, resulting in an underlying association between them. The concluding scene, which embodies the play's combative spirit and the natives's unwavering will, delivers the verdict and sentences Kimathi to death:

> JUDGE: Kimathi so Wachiuri, you are sentenced to die, by hanging. You will be hanged by the rope until you are dead.
> KIMATHI: [*laughs*.]
> *All rise. The judge leaves. The moment his robes are out of sight, Boy and Girl, who have been all along restless, stand. Moving swiftly toward Kimathi, Girl breaks the bread. Boy and Girl simultaneously hold the gun.*
> BOY AND GIRL: Not dead! [*the girl shakes her fists at guards*.]
> *Utter commotion as a struggle between opposing forces ensues. A loud shot is heard. Sudden darkness falls, but only for a moment: for soon, the stage gives way to a mighty crowd of workers and peasants at the centre of which are Boy and Girl, singing a thunderous freedom song. All the soldiers are gone, except for the First Soldier who shyly joins in the singing from behind*. (Mũgo and Thiong'o 84)

As the judge pronounces Kimathi's death sentence, the authority of colonial legal system appears absolute. However, Kimathi's laughing in the face of this sentence demonstrates his reluctance to accept defeat, symbolising the resilience of the revolutionary spirit. Boy and Girl's rapid reaction, breaking the bread, taking the hidden gun and shouting, "Not dead!", displays their dedication to the cause and willingness to resist. According to Naikar, by this statement, "[w]hat they mean is Kimathi's patriotic and Protestant mission will be continued by others. There ensues a struggle between the opposing forces" (37). The active participation of the younger generation shows that the struggle for liberation will continue, motivated by a communal desire to establish the country, Kenya, free of colonial rule. The persistence of the fight emphasises the

unavoidable reality of change as well as the confidence that justice and independence will eventually triumph. Thus, the transformation of Boy and Girl culminates in the closing scene, their response to Kimathi's death sentence represents a turning point. Their defiance, expressed in their declaration, and the resulting uproar, mobilises the audience to shout a Swahili thunderous liberation anthem[19]. Even the First Soldier, who was formerly a member of the repressive apparatus as an assimilated native, is moved to join their cause, demonstrating the unifying power of their newfound revolutionary spirit. This act of disobedience, as well as the courtroom audience's mobilisation into a collective freedom chant, demonstrates that Boy and Girl are now third-stage, revolutionary natives.

Throughout the play, the character Woman and Dedan Kimathi portray the third-stage (revolutionary) native characteristics. These characters remain firmly dedicated to the revolutionary cause, exemplifying the native consciousness defined by Frantz Fanon. Woman's interactions with Boy and Girl provide essential understanding and guidance, increasing their comprehension and dedication to the struggle. Similarly, Dedan Kimathi's consistent role as a leader and symbol of resistance demonstrates his commitment to the liberation struggle. His character functions as a focal point for revolutionary concepts and characters, representing the fight against colonial oppression. Therefore, Woman and Dedan Kimathi represent the enduring spirit of resistance, emphasising the importance of each gender in the fight for independence.

As can be observed in the Mau Mau reminiscences and Woman's acts in the play, she has a close association with Kimathi. Although the play does not reveal her actual identity, her acts and the narrative imply that she is one of the main Mau Mau leaders, alongside Kimathi. For instance, in a scene demonstrating Kimathi's pre-capture actions, the plot shows an energetic and active forest setting populated by several Mau Mau forces and commanders. The setting displays the fighters' exchanges, strategic planning, and decision-making procedures. The turning point moment happens when individuals who betrayed the Mau Mau are apprehended, including Kimathi's own

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[19] Naikar provides the English translation of the song: "Hoo-ye, hoo-ye, Workers of the World / And all the peasant farmers / Let us hold our hands together. / Let us undo the chains of barbarous monsters / We don't want slavery anymore. / Our unity is our strength. / We shall fight till the end. / Hoes high and machetes high, / Let's redeem ourselves and revive the nation" (37).

brother, Wambararia. Kimathi confronts the tough challenge of selecting the proper penalty for the betrayers and solicits advice from his friends, including Woman, on this critical issue (Mũgo and Thiong'o 70-74). The following scene highlights Kimathi's interaction with Woman, emphasising her importance in the revolution. Just prior to this, Kimathi starts to address Woman and emphasises women's significance in the revolution, aiming to both stimulate the people and demonstrate how dignified and conscious of the revolution Woman is, in contrast to those traitors. He praises her unwavering dedication and the countless tasks she has undertaken without complaint, from rescuing people from jails and the clutches of colonial oppression to recruiting brave warriors at great personal risk. Kimathi contrasts her dignity and revolutionary consciousness with the behaviour of those who have betrayed their people. He envisions a future where monuments will be erected at every city corner to honour the courage and dedication of women like her in the struggle for freedom (Mũgo and Thiong'o 72-73). In response, woman delivers a speech emphasising the importance of continuing the liberation struggle and not pitying traitors simply because they are family members. The audience gets immersed and chants "Long live Kenya People's struggle!" as they did afterward Kimathi's speeches (Mũgo and Thiong'o 70-74). This dramatic display of unity strengthens Woman's position as a key figure in the revolution. Magel interprets this issue as follows: "The image of this unnamed woman presented by Ngugi wa Thiong'o reflects many of the qualities exhibited by Kimathi himself" (Magel 243). Both leaders, who are admired for their bravery and commitment, exemplify resistance to the colonial rule and culture and motivate those around them to earn their freedom back.

Kimathi and Woman both have numerous moves in the play that demonstrate their status as third-stage, revolutionary natives. For instance, at the very beginning of the play, Girl and Boy fight over money. Woman breaks up their quarrel, gives Boy the money they had fought for, and tells Boy to stay away from Girl. Boy and Woman then have a chat which shows Boy's efforts to show his gratitude as he states, "I don't know how to thank you for what you have done today. But ... but ... If I can do something, anything, you know ... like cleaning up your house, your compound, weeding your shamba, even washing your clothes-" and Woman angrily responds, "You want to change masters! A black master for a white master! Have you no other horizon? Except

to be a slave! If I didn't have better things to do, why, I would properly thrash you" (Mũgo and Thiong'o 20). The dialogue here demonstrates how colonial mentality has significantly shaped Boy's mindset, as seen by his promise to serve Woman in exchange for her assistance, which reflects his narrow notion of just changing one ruler with another. Her rage emphasises the necessity for actual freedom and dignity, rejecting the idea of just switching "masters." This scene emphasises a crucial topic in the play: the fight is not only against oppression from the outside but also against internalised oppression. Through their dialogues, "[s]he whips up the patriotic zeal and a sense of responsibility in the boy" (Naikar 29).

Evidently, Woman has an important role in the revolutionary awakening of the younger characters, Boy and Girl. Her impact is crucial in their evolution and comprehension of their social and political significance. As a guide and instructor, Woman gives critical information and insight, helping Boy and Girl to a higher level of understanding about their roles in the anti-colonial struggle. For instance, before the last trial, Woman excites Boy and Girl with her daring plan to rescue Kimathi during the trial. She explains that although the mission is risky, it is crucial for the revolution. Woman's detailed strategy, involving a dramatic entrance, timed shooting, and Kimathi's escape amidst the chaos, captivates them. Her confidence and the impudence of the plan energise Boy and Girl, making them eager to participate (Mũgo and Thiong'o 61). It is clear that, Woman plays a critical part as an activist leader and guide for Boy and Girl. Her careful planning of Kimathi's rescue reveals her strategic thinking and invincible commitment to freedom. Her statement, "[t]he struggle must continue," embodies a fundamental principle of Frantz Fanon's revolutionary stage, in which the native actively pursues liberation, often at significant cost to herself (Mũgo and Thiong'o 61; Fanon, *Wretched* 223). The reference to a previous triumph in which "five fighters made a whole Homeguard post surrender" emphasises the possibility of successful rebellion, highlighting the notion that even small, well-organised actions can have tremendous consequences. Boy and Girl's replies, characterised by their enthusiastic imitation of gunshots "Trrrrrrrr! Treerrr!", reflect their shift under Woman's supervision (Mũgo and Thiong'o 60). As stated, they have become significant figures in the Mau Mau movement. Their enthusiasm indicates their internalisation of Woman's revolutionary spirit, which has prepared them to take up guns and contribute to the independence

movement. In this perspective, Woman embodies Fanon's concept of the revolutionary stage native, serving as "an awakener of the people" (*Wretched* 223)

Accordingly, in the last trial, Woman, in striking contrast to her typical male disguise, walks into the courtroom clothed as a "lady" or just herself (Mũgo and Thiong'o 80-81). While her male disguise had allowed her to evade detection and arrest by the police, her true appearance makes her immediately recognisable and vulnerable. Thus, upon entering the courtroom dressed as a lady, the officers quickly identify her and arrest her on the spot. This swift response highlights the heightened vigilance and anxiety of the colonial authorities in the presence of revolutionary figures. Woman's choice to show up at Kimathi's trial without her disguise can be interpreted as a significant statement of defiance and strength. By removing her costume, she publicly identifies with the revolutionary cause, rejecting the need to hide or comply with the colonisers' expectations. This conduct can be viewed as a purposeful and symbolic challenge to colonial authorities, demonstrating that she is willing to stand in solidarity with Kimathi, even at tremendous personal risk. Her decision may also reflect a realisation that the time for covert operations has passed, and that the revolution now necessitates visible, publicly displayed acts of resistance to motivate others and indicate the Mau Mau movement's continuous commitment. Woman begins to sing a freedom song while being chained and led out of the courtroom. Her strong, rebellious voice fills the room, packed with a sense of rebellion and unity. The song goes:

> Bururi uyu witu
> Andu Airu
> Ngai ni aturathimiire
> Na akiuga tutikoima kuo.[20] (Mũgo and Thiong'o 81)

The use of English in court indicates the coloniser's power over both legal and social structures, echoing Memmi's argument that "[t]he entire bureaucracy, the entire court system, all industry hears and uses the colonizer's language" (150). When Woman sings the Kikuyu song in the English-speaking court, it transforms into a potent act of resistance and cultural defiance. The song directly challenges the colonial authority, which is represented by the English-speaking court, by stating the Kenyan people's

[20] Glosbe interprets this Kikuyu song in the meaning that God has given us this country, blessed us, and declared that we shall never leave it. ("Bururi uyu witu/Andu Airu/Ngai ni aturathimiire/Na akiuga tutikoima kuo.")

strong attachment to their land and their inherent right to continue living on it. Moreover, singing a Kikuyu song emphasises the conflict between the indigenous resistance, which is based on a profound sense of belonging, tradition, and beliefs, and the colonial power, which aims to impose its culture, rules, and values on the native people. Hence, Woman claims a place for her marginalised culture alongside honouring it through her Kikuyu singing. Her Kikuyu singing also suggests that the revolution is not only an armed fight, but also a social and cultural one. The play's themes of resistance to oppression, the value of preserving their land and language, and the uprightness of the Mau Mau movement—as personified by Dedan Kimathi—are all highlighted in this act. Moreover, according to Fanon, the third-stage or revolutionary native "[feels] the need to speak to their nation, to compose the sentence which expresses the heart of the people, and to become the mouthpiece of a new reality in action" (*Wretched* 223). Therefore, through her actions, Woman shows the traits of the revolutionary native described by Fanon, a person who raises the consciousness of people, becomes the voice of the nation, and is willing to risk imprisonment or death for the cause.

It is clear from the play's title and the historical fact that Dedan Kimathi as a revolutionary leader is a vivid representative of Fanon's third-stage native. The role of being a people's awakener, which is perhaps the most basic feature of the third-stage, is particularly important in the case of Dedan Kimathi. Unlike the other figures examined thus far, Kimathi's status as a genuine revolutionary leader gives him a distinct authority and persuasive impact that extends beyond the fictional world of the play. His position is not just symbolic, but also firmly founded in the historical reality of anti-colonial struggle, making him a role model for the awakening and mobilisation of oppressed masses. As Affiah and Eni put it, "Kimathi is a selfless self-sacrificing leader of the Mau Mau revolution. He has good organizational abilities which he uses to galvanize the people to action" (67).

The play contains numerous instances of Kimathi mobilising the populace, including labourers and peasants. During one of the trials, a settler becomes enraged with Kimathi, believing that he has lost everything he owns because of Kimathi, and points a gun at him, saying: "I had perfect relationships with my boys … / Then that devil, Field

Marshal, came … / Poisoned simple minds led astray their God-fearing souls with his black mumbo Jumbo" (Mũgo and Thiong'o 29). This scene from the play exemplifies the settler's patronising and insulting behaviour towards native people, demonstrating a deeply rooted colonialist perspective that regards natives as simple, obedient, and dependent by nature on the coloniser's charity. The settler's claim that he has "perfect relationships" with his black workers because he provides them with essential needs such as food, education, and healthcare demonstrates his belief in a hierarchical connection in which he is the giver and the native people are grateful receivers. The threat that opposition poses to the colonial system is emphasised by the settler's anxiety and rage at Kimathi's revolutionary influence upsetting his imagined perfect order. Thus, because of Kimathi's position as an awakener, the labourers recognised they had to take action against the settlers because colonialism and their living conditions were intolerable.

A similar belief is expressed by Kimathi in a scene where Kimathi begins a lengthy statement in court about justice as he is tried. He asserts that the only way to achieve true justice is to combat imperialist powers in a revolutionary manner. He emphasises the need to continue the battle, and makes a passionate call to action for the African people. The scene shows the intensity and urgency of the revolutionary movement as the crowd reacts with enthusiasm, rising and applauding to demonstrate their commitment to the ongoing liberation struggle as well as their support for Kimathi's message. As the speech advances, Kimathi attracts the audience with stirring and passionate oratory, attempting to galvanise them:

> Organize in the mountains
> Know that your only
> Kindred blood is he who is in the struggle
> Denounce those who weaken
> Our struggle by creating ethnic divisions
> Uproot from you those
> Who are selling out to imperialism
> Kenyan masses shall be free! (Mũgo and Thiong'o 83-84)

In his speech, Kimathi advocates for organised resistance, emphasising the necessity of solidarity among those participating in the struggle for liberation. His call exemplifies the "harambee" spirit, encouraging people to unite together and join in the Mau Mau War. The focus on "kindred blood" as individuals involved in the struggle reinforces the

concept of unity, implying that the links forged through collective resistance are stronger than any tribal, ethnic or biological connection. As the atmosphere grows tense and the speech assumes the heat of a political rally, the Judge steps in, giving the final verdict: “Kimathi so Wachiuri, you are sentenced to die, by hanging. You will be hanged by the rope until you are dead” and Kimathi responds with laughter (84). The scene changes suddenly as the Judge imposes Kimathi’s death sentence, emphasising the violent repressive means used to silence revolutionary voices. Kimathi’s reaction, characterised by laughing, demonstrates his defiance and undying spirit, even in the face of approaching execution. His laugh can be seen as a symbol of his victory against the oppressors, proving that his commitment and the revolutionary struggle are unaffected by physical death. As mentioned above, following the Judge’s decision, Boy and Girl start singing a Swahili song. The song’s lyrics express a firm commitment to resistance, saying that the struggle will continue until freedom has been achieved in their land and slavery has been eliminated. Accordingly, “[t]he imperial government may hang Kimathi’s body, but his spirit cannot be killed by anyone. Kimathi’s sacrifice will pave the way for the emergence of a free nation i.e. Kenya” (Naikar 37).

Another distinguishing feature of Kimathi’s personality is his continuous poetic speaking. This is expressly confirmed by the judge, who asserts, “I know you are a poet, an orator, a politician” (Mũgo and Thiong’o 26). Every sentence delivered by Kimathi has a poetic structure that embodies both revolutionary zeal and literary value. His words are more than just speech; they are loaded with the strength and artistry of revolutionary literature, functioning as a weapon in the fight for independence. Fanon claims that the native intellectual in the third stage composes works that are combative, revolutionary, and nationalistic (*Wretched* 223). In this context, Kimathi proves to have another aspect of the third-stage native in him. Furthermore, being a native on the verge of execution while fighting for his country’s freedom, Kimathi meets another condition of Fanon’s third stage. His circumstance exemplifies the ultimate sacrifice that a revolutionary must be willing to make, capturing the spirit of the third-stage native intellectual idealised by Fanon. As a consequence, Kimathi’s poetic and mobilising discourse, combined with his belief in the goal of liberation, establishes him as the ultimate representation of Fanon’s ideal revolutionary native in the development of a national culture during decolonisation.

So far, it is seen that different characters in *The Trial* represent distinct stages in the formation of national culture, as defined by Frantz Fanon. The play, set in the background of Kenya's battle for independence, naturally represents the various stages of decolonisation of Kenya and the people's respective roles in achieving it. According to Fanon, "[t]o fight for national culture means in the first place to fight for the liberation of the nation, that material keystone which makes the building of a culture possible" (*Wretched* 232). Fanon, thus, emphasises the inextricability of cultural progress from the wider fight for national liberation. As the conflicts continue, national culture develops, shaped by the sacrifices and resistance to colonial domination. Indeed, it is possible to observe the development of the Kenyan national culture i.e., Mau Mau, Dedan Kimathi, Harambee, Land, Languages, Orature, and Theatre in the play *The Trial.*

The protagonist of *The Trial*, Mau Mau leader Dedan Kimathi, makes it clear that the first two components of Kenyan national culture are well reflected in the play. This is notably evident when Kimathi states, during a visit by Henderson in his cell moments before being tortured, "I will fight to the bitter end. Protect our soil. Protect our people. This is what I, Kimathi wa Wachiuri, swore at initiation" (54). The initiation he mentions is, indeed, the oath sworn by members of the Mau Mau movement. To put it differently, to join the struggle, "members of the Kikuyu, Embu, Meru, and Kamba ethnic groups took an oath of unity and secrecy to fight for their freedom from British rule and snatch back what belonged to them: their land. The Mau Mau Movement emerged with that oath, which embarked the country on its long hard road to national sovereignty" (Dione 44). Even during the repeated beatings or leading up to his death, he steadfastly adheres to the oath, which says, "[he] will never sell land to any white man" (Barnett and Njama 132). Because of Kimathi's loyalty to Mau Mau till the very end and his teachings on revolution throughout the play, the two elements become inseparable in the play. As Magel notes, "[u]tilizing the historical impressions of the Kenyan people as a foundation, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Micere Mugo identify Kimathi as the armed resistance movement [Mau Mau]. As such, he embodies the peasants' armed resistance to British colonial oppression" (242).

Therefore, in *The Trial*, the portrayals of Mau Mau and Dedan Kimathi have a profound impact on the characters' transition through Frantz Fanon's phases of native consciousness. The play's depiction of Kimathi and the Mau Mau movement helps to progress the characters through these stages, representing their changing awareness and dedication towards national culture. For instance, the play's portrayal of Mau Mau and Dedan Kimathi aids the First Soldier, who is already targeted to revolutionary ideas. These aspects strengthen his commitment and help him move to the second stage of native consciousness, when he begins to oppose colonial structures. The presence of Kimathi and the Mau Mau in the play thus acts as a catalyst for his growth, driving him towards a more profound involvement in the revolutionary struggle. The play's use of Mau Mau and Kimathi as central motifs aids the characters of Boy, Girl, and Woman's development into revolutionary natives. Through their encounters and the impact of these cultural themes, they adopt a more radical vision of liberty and national culture. The portrayal of these people, together with the play's larger themes of freedom and resistance, highlights their compatibility with Fanon's third stage, which is defined by a deep dedication to national revolution and cultural rebirth. Overall, *The Trial* raises the components Dedan Kimathi and the Mau Mau as symbols of resistance while also emphasising their importance in the protagonists' journey towards revolutionary consciousness. The play's final emphasis on the continued battle, even in the face of Kimathi's death, emphasises the long-term importance of these aspects in the construction of Kenyan national culture.

Despite its pre-independence setting, *The Trial* prominently emphasises the notion of "harambee—unity and collective effort. While British colonial powers attempted to undermine and dominate the resistance by creating ethnic divisions, Kenyans utilised the spirit of 'harambee' to construct a nation" (Beta et al. 692) The play's representation of Kenyan togetherness emphasises the resistance to divisive efforts. Woman expresses their collective strength by declaring, "[u]nited, our strength becomes the faith that moves mountains" (Mũgo and Thiong'o 60). Her critique of colonial techniques is clear when she considers the artificial distinctions made by the British: "We are told you are Luo, 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 other. [...] We are only ants trodden upon by heavy, merciless elephants" (Mũgo and Thiong'o 14). Woman's

metaphor effectively conveys the colonial dynamics at play. According to this depiction, the "heavy, merciless elephants" represent colonial powers, which are powerful and oppressive forces that tread on indigenous peoples. The "ants" represent the Kenyan people, who, despite their demographic and moral power, are crushed by colonial exploitation. This metaphor also emphasises the colonisers' unrelenting and dehumanising force. By revealing this, Woman stresses the importance of solidarity and a collective fight against the real enemy: the coloniser.

Kimathi's declaration that "Kenya is one indivisible whole. The cause we fight for is larger than provinces; it shatters ethnic barriers. It is a whole people's cause" (Mũgo and Thiong'o 46) highlights the Mau Mau movement's preference for unification over regionalism. The movement's resistance to colonial control was about more than just gaining autonomy for certain regions or ethnic groups; it was also about obtaining unified national sovereignty that transcended tribal divisions. The play shows that Kimathi's struggle is not only against colonial rulers, but also against internal figures who seek to exploit the movement's goals for their own divisive purposes. These chauvinists utilise the Mau Mau's heroism to divide Kenyan society and further their own selfish interests (Kinyatti 114). As Affiah and Eni argue,

> [t]ribe and tongue, religious and political affiliations must be put aside so as to unite, form a common front to confront the oppressor. The playwrights aesthetically portray this. […] The play is a clarion call for a united front to liberate the society. Kimathi's vision of unity can be considered national not regional as can be seen in the fact that he wrote letters to different parts of the country in order to gain the allegiance of all the tribes. (67)

Kimathi's opposition to manipulative dividers through addressing the poeple exemplifies the Mau Mau movement's larger vision of harambee: to unite all Kenyans in their quest for freedom and reject any attempts to split them along regional or tribal lines. And since all these also manifest themselves in the play, there is a true realisation of harambee in *The Trial*. Gikandi claims that there is even a hidden message that captures the essence of the harambee spirit at the play's conclusion:

> It is notable that at the end of *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, individuals (the soloists) and the collective (the choral group) sing the same song and help reinforce the same message. The central symbol of the drama– and indeed its architecture–is not the binary opposition between an enlightened individual and the masses, but the usurpation of individual identity by the enlightened collective will. (176)

Thus, the play is consistent with the "harambee" concept, which emphasises that the Kenyan people's strength is found in their unity and group endeavours rather than in the actions of individuals. This message makes a strong statement about the significance of unity in the fight for independence by promoting the notion that freedom and the formation of a national culture necessitate the usurpation of individual identity by the collective will. As a result, the play demonstrates how the concept of "harambee" is not only fundamental to the plot, but also actively embodied and promoted by the characters representing the third stage of native consciousness, who champion the communal struggle for national freedom.

Although English is the principal language of the play, *The Trial* incorporates multiple Kenyan languages, most notably Swahili and Kikuyu, in several scenes. For example, the majority of the songs in the play are written in Swahili or Kikuyu. These songs express themes such as restoring the land, the yearning for freedom, unity, and the declaration that Kenyans fully own resources such as crops, lands, and factories (Naikar 37). The recurring themes highlight a strong African identity and resistance to colonialism. Aside from that, it is unusual that both black and white officers who came to Kenya interact in Kenyan languages. For instance, a white officer Waitina orders the African soldiers, "Askari, cover the streets well and shoot down the bloody terrorists. Sikia?[21]" (Mũgo and Thiong'o 6). They also speak Swahili not only to the soldiers who serve them, but also to other African passerbys:

> WAITINA: Leta karatasi yako.
> FIRST MAN: Sina.
> WAITINA: (*kick*): Sina Afande! Rudia!
> FIRST MAN: Sina Afande.[22] (Mũgo and Thiong'o 7)

Or, while conducting various criminal record checks, Swahili is used:

> JOHNNIE: Simama kabisa! Good. Passbook.
> WOMAN: Ati pasi?
> JOHNNIE: Ndiyo, passbook. Wapi passbook?
> WOMAN: Sina.
> JOHNNIE: Sema Afande.[23] (Mũgo and Thiong'o 9)

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[21] "Listen! Do you understand!? (Rude connotation)" (Katrak, *Dramaturg Notes* 4).
[22] "Show your papers. / I don't have (my papers). / I don't have (my papers), Master! Repeat! / I don't have (my papers), Master" (Katrak, *Dramaturg Notes* 4).
[23] "Stand up straight! Good. Passbook. / My passbook? / Yes passbook. Where is your passbook? / I don't have (my papers) / Say Master" (Katrak, *Dramaturg Notes* 4).

The play's use of English and indigenous languages deepens the narrative by highlighting the ambiguities of identity in colonial Kenya, and this allows for various interpretations of why the native tongue is used in this pre-independence play. First, the utilisation of Swahili or Kikuyu by both white and black characters in the play may demonstrate that the native population has not completely abandoned their indigenous languages in favour of the coloniser's language, English. This demonstrates that English is not the exclusive language of communication, with an important portion of the population still speaking in local languages. This language persistence is critical in resisting collective assimilation since it contributes to the preservation and strength of national culture. The continuous use of indigenous languages serves as a cultural anchor, strengthening people's identity and togetherness in the face of colonial powers. Secondly, colonisers' use of native languages may serve as a strategic instrument to further colonial power by diminishing the authenticity of indigenous identities and weakening the cultural importance of native languages, undermining the native's unity. Additionally, the coloniser's use of the local language could also be interpreted as a reverse form of mimicry, in which the coloniser adopts features of the native culture in order to support rather than disrupt the colonial hierarchy. The coloniser may utilise the language to exert dominance, demonstrating that they are capable of speaking in the native language while keeping their dominant position. As evidenced by the excerpts above, the white characters in the play use Swahili largely to issue directives, emphasising the dynamics of authority and dominance.

Language plays a dual role in *The Trial*, serving as both an instrument of oppressive colonial rule and a channel of resistance. The play's use of language, particularly the interaction of indigenous languages and English, confuses its standing as a fully emancipated component of Kenyan national culture. While the use of indigenous languages by black characters might be interpreted as a form of resistance, affirming their cultural identity and resisting colonial dominance, the context tempers this resistance. The colonisers utilise Swahili not to fight colonial control, but to maintain their dominance and perpetuate existing power systems. This illustrates that, despite efforts to absorb local languages, colonial influence remains, preventing the full realisation of an emancipated national culture. Furthermore, the play is written in

English, a residue of colonial past that emphasises the ongoing existence of colonial frameworks in the narrative. While the play's use of indigenous languages is significant, it falls short of totally overcoming the general influence of English and the colonial systems it depicts. As a result, despite the play's efforts to use local languages as tools of resistance, the element of language cannot be deemed totally emancipated from Kenyan national culture. The continuous colonial impact, as well as the play's use of English as its major language, demonstrate that the building of a strong, autonomous national culture is still in progress.

As an element of national culture, land is a major and deeply embedded symbol in *The Trial*, expressing Kenyans' emotional devotion to their homeland. As mentioned above, the play's songs regularly highlight the importance of land, demonstrating how it represents both a physical and spiritual tie to the nation's identity. Woman's song, which is sung during the last trial, emphasises Kenyans' strong feelings of ownership of and devotion to their land. Furthermore, the country itself and the bountiful resources it offers are included in the play's definition of land. Thus, the takeover of their land represents the decline of their abundant natural riches as well as the loss of their national territory. Woman laments the abuse of their resources and emphasises this point further when she states, "[o]ur own food eaten and leftovers thrown to us—in our own land, where we should have the whole share. We buy wood from our own forests; sweat on our own 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" (Mũgo and Thiong'o 18).

Thus, under colonial control, the land is shown in the play as an embodiment of injustice and exploitation as well as a symbol of national culture. Fanon's expression, "[t]he wealth of the imperial countries is [colonised people's] wealth too" (*Wretched* 102), perfectly reflects the situation and Woman's assertion that the colonised people have a legitimate claim to the economic resources that imperial powers have stolen. It criticises the way in which imperialists steal land and its resources, robbing native communities of their just rewards. This emphasises the unfairness of colonialism, which deprives the native population of economic opportunities by using the resources of colonised areas for the gain of the colonisers. As a result, in *The Trial*, despite Kenyans'

deep attachment to their land, the continued occupation and exploitation by colonial powers considerably impedes the establishment of a unified national identity. While the play depicts the third stage of native consciousness through characters who feel a great connection to their homeland and anticipate a liberated future, colonialism's continued presence hinders this development. Continued colonial meddling inhibits Kenyans from completely realising their connection to their land and limiting their ability to profit from its benefits. Thus, while the play represents the revolutionary goals of the third stage, the persisting colonial heritage impedes the formation of a truly autonomous and integrated national culture.

Moreover*, The Trial* features numerous national songs and performances, to the point where the play might be called a musical. Songs are not only casual; they are vital to the play's structure and thematic representation. These musical elements are integrated into the environment from the start, emphasising their central importance in the story. This focus on orature emphasises how the play uses music and performance to communicate historical and cultural experiences, integrating them into the storytelling process and increasing audience engagement. As Lovesey puts it, "*The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*—enjoins active participation: in its last lines people from all walks of life and all Kenyan nationalities sing a song of victory" (151). Therefore, songs are a vital component of the *The Trial*, serving as a reflection of the play's cultural and intellectual foundations. The opening song, which is sung in Swahili by a multitude of peasants, is especially important since it establishes the mood for the entire play. The stage directions for this particular scene goes as follows: "*Loud singing by a crowd of peasants. Their voices combine aggression with firm determination. Note that the peasants singing should also enact the flashback of Black people's History that follows the song*" (Mũgo and Thiong'o 4). Furthermore, the song's lyrics, which are translated as, "[w]e will take back our land; we will fight for our freedom; we will liberate our industries; we will liberate our education; we will liberate our culture; we will liberate our land[24]," capture the oppressed people's spirit of revolt and unwavering resolve.

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[24] Glosbe interprets this Swahili song as "[w]e will take back our land; we will fight for our freedom; we will liberate our industries; we will liberate our education; we will liberate our culture; we will liberate our land" ("Tutanyakua/Mashamba yetu/Tupiganie/Uhuru wetu/Natukomboe/Elimu yetu/Tutanyakua Viwanda vyetu/Utamaduni/Ni mashamba yetu/Damu na jasho/Zatiririka/Tutakomboa/Udongo wetu!").

Orature, which includes the oral traditions of song, storytelling, and performance, is a potent tool of resistance in addition to being a means of preserving culture. Hence, the songs in this play serve as a vehicle for group expression, bringing the audience and the characters together around a common struggle and sense of optimism. The singing's aggressive yet determined tone highlights the link between cultural identity and the struggle for liberation and represents the peasants' will to recapture their land and rights. The fact that the peasants' singing depicts a "*flashback of Black people's History*" (Mũgo and Thiong'o 4) adds additional element to the play's usage of orature. This method emphasises the importance of oral traditions in preserving and spreading history, particularly the histories of marginalised populations that were systematically erased or distorted by colonial powers. The flashback not only places the current battle within a larger historical narrative, but it also serves as a reminder of the continuous history of resistance. That is, this song is more than just a musical opening; it is a powerful statement of collective memory and revolutionary ideology, linking the characters' current struggles to their historical roots while underlining the play's themes of emancipation and cultural reclamation.

It is important in this sense that the play concludes with a Swahili song reflecting on the performance's ideological theme, as well as Boy's and Girl' declaration, "Not dead!" (Mũgo and Thiong'o 84). According to Gikandi's English summary of the song, which is concerned with

> the movement of a big river that flows from east to west, north to south; [people] are part of this river, which is posited as the symbol of the revolutionary movement which the colonial enemy, by condemning the hero to death, has unwittingly created. The singers note that by killing the firstborn in the African family (the revolutionary leader, Dedan Kimathi), the enemy has ironically created more revolutionaries; the new movement now vows to fight to the very end using hoes and machetes to liberate itself, determined to build a new future. (175-176)

The song's depiction of a large river flowing in all directions symbolises the never-ending power of the revolutionary cause, implying that resistance to colonial oppression is as inevitable and natural as a stream. The usage of this natural metaphor is consistent with the tradition of orature, which frequently invokes nature to describe profound truths and communal experiences of the Kenyan people (Thiong'o, *Globalectics* 77). The group and the soloists support the notion that the revolutionary battle is a national endeavour rather than the responsibility of a single leader by singing it together. On the

one hand, the revolutionary movement, symbolised by the river, is strengthened by the blood of the firstborn, or Dedan Kimathi, the revolutionary leader, rather than being repressed. On the other hand, it illustrates the people's tenacity and the ongoing struggle, a subject frequently highlighted in *The Trial.* According to Nicholls, "[w]hat music as a popular cultural form offers Ngugi and Mugo is a participatory and expressive model of community, a common narrative of oral history and a vehicle for political mobilization to which all might eventually contribute" (154). Consequently, the song turns the revolutionary struggle into a common cultural narrative that has become embedded in the people's collective psyche and is passed down through generations.

Aside from the music, the mythical images of Kimathi described by Boy and Girl stand are elements of oral literature in the play. Boy and Girl illustrate this in their exchanges about Kimathi:

> BOY: (*also catching the doubt in the Girl*): How do we really know that it is Kimathi that they have arrested and not another person?
>
> GIRL: I myself do not believe it! Because Kimathi would have known of the arrest and escaped in time. I have heard of the story of how once he wrote a letter to the Governor. He said he would dine with the Governor at State House. The Governor collected all the police in Nairobi to come and capture Kimathi. But Kimathi went there. He was disguised as a European Inspector of Police. Later, he wrote another letter to the Governor: Thank you for your dinner last night. And it was signed: F/Marshal D.K. (Mũgo and Thiong'o 62)

The quotation above, from *The Trial,* shows how oral literature helped shape and perpetuate the myth of Kimathi. The conversation between Boy and Girl revolves around a story that was most likely passed down through oral tradition, reflecting how Kimathi's actions have been mythologised and imprinted in the communal memory of the people. As Magel argues, "[t]hese folk legends of Kimathi wa Wachiuri highlight the symbolic nature of this figure. He represents a set of associations, ideas and feelings about the Mau Mau which transcends perceptual experience itself" (241-242). Thus, components of Kenyan national culture, such as Mau Mau, Dedan Kimathi, Land, Language, and Harambee, are deeply rooted in the songs of *The Trial*. Orature is an important tool for freedom, heavily influencing the plot and creating a revolutionary mood. The portrayal and evolution of characters embodying the third stage of native consciousness transforms orature into a strong tool in their search for emancipation.

These third-stage protagonists employ orature to express their resistance, unite their community, and oppose colonial oppression, thus promoting the revolutionary spirit. Although colonial powers continue to exert influence, the play demonstrates how literature helps to the development of a national culture and the desire of true freedom.

Finally, in terms of theatre, despite all of the play's revolutionary context and its inclusion of several components of national culture, its impact on the country is not the same. Gikandi argues that

> the state was unhappy with the ideological message of *The Trial*, a work that challenged the legitimacy of the postcolonial state by calling attention to its decidedly colonial foundations; but the state did not consider this threat strong enough to ban the production of the play. In contrast, *I Will Marry When I Want*, a work that bore the same ideological message and structure *as The Trial*, was considered such a threat to the national security interest that it was banned after only a few months of performance and its author was subsequently imprisoned. (283)

While both plays criticise the postcolonial state's colonialist roots, the government regarded *The Trial* as not as much of a threat, most likely because of its performance setting and mediums. As Amoko explains, "[o]riginally written in English, *The Trial* premiered at the majestic Kenya National Theatre building in Nairobi with a multiethnic cast comprising mainly university-based or university-trained actors" (111). Those study findings highlight the colonial Kenyan state's strategic considerations in its handling of revolutionary theatre. The government's decision to not ban *The Trial* in the first place, in spite of its harsh message, suggests that the Kenya National Theatre's colonial-controlled structure, combined with the play's production in English and by professional actors, may have rendered the play merely symbolic instead of mobiliser in the mind of the state. Although *The Trial* integrates elements of Kenyan national culture, its style of production and presentation restricts its potential to fully represent the spirit of the Mau Mau rebellion, which was based on peasant and worker struggles. To properly resonate with the masses and portray the revolutionary ideals of the Mau Mau, the play must be performed in indigenous languages such as Swahili or Kikuyu and performed in public locations by people directly involved in the struggle. This method, like that of *I Will Marry*, would strip away the colonial touch and allow the play to operate as a real expression of national culture. In this way, the play may serve

as a more effective medium for revolutionary consciousness, by integrating its form with its substance to confront the postcolonial state.

However, although *The Trial* did not initially appear to pose a substantial danger to the state, its actual strength developed when it resonated with the people through its performances. The moments of dozens of Kenyans proudly and joyfully singing Mau Mau songs in the streets of Nairobi following the premiere demonstrates how the play resonated with its audience beyond the bounds of the theatre (Amoko 109). As the performance sparked significant discussions regarding the Mau Mau Rebellion and strove to create a genuine national culture, its impact grew. The governments's subsequent attempts to suppress the play (probably because of the ban of *I Will Marry*), including efforts by Daniel Arap Moi's government to prevent it from being performed in London, highlighted its potential to disrupt the postcolonial status quo (Sicherman, "Mythologizer" 264).

Kenyatta's decision not to prohibit *The Trial* may have been influenced by his own background as a Mau Mau leader (Harmon 93). The play, which focusses on anti-colonial resistance, is consistent with his past of opposing colonial forces, and the play's major target is the colonisers, not the Kenyan government. This connection with Kenyatta's past, combined with the play's lack of direct criticism of his administration, may have made it less offensive to him. On the other side, *I Will Marry* explicitly criticises Kenya's neo-colonial government, highlighting the regime's failings and contradictions after independence. This more explicit critique of Kenyan governance, particularly Kenyatta's own actions, would have been interpreted as a severe threat, resulting in the play's censorship (Thiong'o, "The Third World Mainstream" 289-290). The disparity in how these two plays were treated reflects the different levels of threat they constituted to the ruling administration at the time. Moi's choice to suppress *The Trial* might be viewed in light of his lack of personal involvement with the Mau Mau movement. Unlike Kenyatta, who was personally involved in the anti-colonial struggle, Moi did not have a revolutionary past (Stapleton). As a result, he may have interpreted the play's celebration of Mau Mau resistance and revolutionary message as a challenge to his authority. The play's emphasis on Mau Mau partisanship, which may provoke

opposition or revive revolutionary feelings, most likely encouraged Moi's efforts to restrict the play's increased influence, ultimately resulting in its suppression.

Despite the play's inclusion of numerous theatrical components, the tools used in its construction, such as the usage of English in the context of language, impede the complete realisation of an emancipated national culture. The play's theatrical approaches and practices, however rich and expressive, yet reflect and serve colonial concerns. As Fanon argues,

> [a]t the very moment when the native intellectual is anxiously trying to create a cultural work he fails to realize that he is utilizing techniques and language which are borrowed from the stranger in his country. He contents himself with stamping these instruments with a hallmark which he wishes to be national, but which is strangely reminiscent of exoticism. (*Wretched* 223)

As a result, the play's performative features fail to completely express Fanon's third stage of national culture development. This stage, which requires a comprehensive and realistic expression of national identity, is hampered by lingering colonial effects encoded in the theatrical tools and frameworks used. Thus, while the play adds to revolutionary discourse, it falls short of attaining Fanon's goal of a totally freed national culture.

In conclusion, *The Trial* accurately captures Frantz Fanon's three stages of building a national culture. Characters such as the Second Soldier, Gatotia, Business Executive, Politician, and Priest demonstrate the first step, assimilation, by mimicking colonial behaviours and ideals. The First Soldier represents the second phase, rejection, as he returns to his cultural roots, symbolising a break from colonial influences. Meanwhile, characters such as Boy, Girl, Woman, and Dedan Kimathi represent the third phase, revolution, which involves developing revolutionary ideals and arousing national awareness. The play depicts the road from assimilation to revolution using these images, emphasising that, while substantial progress has been accomplished, the building of a truly emancipated national culture is still ongoing. The struggle shown in the play is a crucial factor in the development of Kenyan national culture, supporting Fanon's claim that national culture arises from the ashes of revolutionary struggle. This struggle is powerfully depicted by the unrelenting will of Dedan Kimathi, the Mau Mau movement's leader, who personifies resistance and the fight for independence.

Moreover, the play effectively depicts components of Kenyan national culture, such as the devotion for the Mau Mau, the integration of orature, and the notion of harambee, all of which symbolise Kenyans' collective belonging and shared identity. These characteristics are depicted with remarkable intensity and resonance, emphasising their importance in the larger story of Kenyan culture. However, the play falls short in several areas since certain essential components of national culture continue to be influenced by colonial forces. British colonial forces' dominance of land, language, and the theatrical medium limits the play's potential to completely realise and reflect Kenyan national culture. The play's use of English as its principal language, its performance in a colonial theatre, and the continuous British authority over land all point to colonialism's continued influence, which limits the full realisation of a liberated national culture.

2. CHAPTER
NATIONAL CULTURE IN MAKING, AGAIN?:
I WILL MARRY WHEN I WANT

> "… national culture is in opposition to foreign imperialist exploitation and domination as well as to internal exploitation and oppression by a native ruling class in servile alliance with imperialism" (Thiong'o, "Ngugi wa Thiong'o: Interview" 179).

This chapter examines how Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Ngũgĩ wa Mĩrĩĩ's *I Will Marry* portrays neo-colonialism and its impact on national culture during the post-independence era in the light of Fanon's three stages of the formation of the national culture. Despite Kenya's independence and emancipation from colonial rule, the country faces new masters, represented by developing local elites, creating a microcosm of colonial rule in post-independence Kenya. The play's characters and themes address neo-colonialism, which depicts the continuous battle for true independence and national culture in postcolonial Kenya. The theory underlying this analysis holds that the effective formation of a national culture in Kenya is dependent on the native population progressing through the stages of assimilation, rejection, and revolution, as stated by Frantz Fanon. *I Will Marry* illustrates these stages, emphasising the destructive nature of neo-colonialism, by which former colonial powers maintain control by economic, religious, and cultural methods, frequently with the participation of the local elite. Owing to the natives' perplexed reactions to neo-colonialism, the play *I Will Marry* depicts both advancement and regression throughout the three phases of cultural formation. This chapter illustrates how *I Will Marry* functions as a potent critique of neo-colonialism and a crucial expression of the ongoing struggle to establish a truly independent Kenyan national culture by examining the behaviours, ideologies, and shifts of the characters, Kioi, Jezebel, Ikuua, Helen, Ndugire, Kiguunda, Wangeci, Njooki, and Gicaamba and it makes it clear that the components of Kenyan national culture are seen as crucial instruments for moving Fanon's revolutionary stage forward.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, formerly known as James Ngugi, sets out on a significant experience in 1977 that has a profound effect on his creative and academic pursuits. Ngũgĩ reflects on how his work with the Kamĩrĩĩthũ Community Education and Cultural

Centre transforms the theoretical discussion of language into a practical application in a compelling interview with Wangui wa Goro and Harish Trivedi (Ngũgĩ, "Ngugi wa Thiong'o in Conversation" 401). In an effort to preserve cultural identity and highlight the value of native tongues, Ngũgĩ chooses to speak in Gikuyu rather than English, the language of the coloniser. Working closely with the community members, he discovers that speaking Gikuyu is necessary to interact with them in an authentic way. He then decides to write a play at the centre that would be firmly based in the people's own pasts, cultures, languages, and customs. This play would not only be the result of his own imagination; rather, it would be a community effort, knitted together by the enthusiastic involvement and cooperation of several members. To ensure that the play remained true to the voices and experiences of the people it aimed to depict, several scenes were written word for word based on the dictated words of an illiterate peasant woman from Kamĩrĩĩthũ (Thiong'o, "Ngugi wa Thiong'o Still" 95-96). The result was a work that not only reflected the community's rich cultural past, but also demonstrated the power of collaborative creation, as the people's wisdom and traditions were brought to life onstage.

The play in question is called *Ngaahika Ndeenda*. Co-written with Ngũgĩ wa Mĩrĩĩ and with the people, the play *Ngaahika Ndeenda*, or *I Will Marry When I Want*[25] in English, is a notable piece of postcolonial African writing. It deals with how affluent landowners exploit impoverished landless people, and it strikes a deep connection with rural populations that are deeply patriotic (Mĩrĩĩ and Thiong'o 1). However, the political difficulties surrounding the use of indigenous languages are highlighted by the Kenyan government's suppression of the play in November 1977 and Ngũgĩs' subsequent imprisonment by "the neo-colonial government of Jomo Kenyatta, which allowed

[25] When Ngugi is asked in an interview about the significance of the title, he responds, "it is taken from the song sung by the drunk character at the beginning and also by Kiguunda at the end when he loses his land, and he is out of work like the other one. Obviously, it is meant to remind people of the similarities in the situations of the two characters. When you hear the song at the beginning and then at the end sung by somebody else, you think about the two situations. But it is also an idea of rebellion. In many countries people are expected to marry. This idea that I will not necessarily do as I'm expected to do there is an element of rebellion there. The song itself was very popular in Kenya some time ago among young people when they were slightly rebellious against tradition and authority. But not in a criminal way. Just in sentiment. So, the title was taken also as a reference to that very popular song. Remember in the play that the idea of marriage is one of the central themes. Kiguunda and his wife marry according to their national ways. They also have to marry according to the church. The play is about marriage, but is also about the idea of cultural differences. The Christian marriage connotes one kind of value system. The national wedding ceremony connotes another type of value system" ("Telephone" 354).

continued ownership of the best resources by multinationals and white farmers, and promoted the enrichment of a black bourgeoisie at the expense of ordinary Kenyans" (Plastow 78). During his time in jail, Ngũgĩ was questioned about possessing forbidden literary material (Thiong'o, "Ngugi wa Thiong'o Still" 93). In response, he stated firmly that prohibiting any type of literature is fundamentally wrong, emphasising that all Kenyans have the right to access both national and international publications. Ngũgĩ claimed that literature should not be controlled, and that people have the right to engage with varied perspectives and ideas, whether from within or beyond the country's borders. However, he also stressed his cautious respect to the law, adding that, while he personally opposed such bans, he made certain not to own any things that were formally illegal. He added that the majority of the books confiscated from his home were by Marx, Lenin, and Engels, none of which were banned in Kenya at the time. The authorities also confiscated twenty-six copies of his own play, *I Will Marry* (Thiong'o, "Ngugi wa Thiong'o Still" 93). This instance demonstrates the extent to which the government attempted to repress not only indigenous language works, but also writings that challenged the existing status quo or promoted alternative ideologies. Ngũgĩ's imprisonment was part of a greater political campaign to control and limit the diffusion of ideas through literature, especially those articulated in the people's native languages.

Even though Ngũgĩ had many challenges while he was imprisoned, he comes out of it still determined to write only in Gikuyu. Ngũgĩ's commitment to using Gikuyu and his focus on addressing social issues in his work highlight his belief in the power of national languages to reflect and critique societal realities. This perspective is evident in his analysis of the impact of *Ngaahika Ndeenda*. As Ngũgĩ asserts,

> I believe that our national theater, our national literature, can only be truly so if they are based in our national languages, and if they correctly reflect our society and the class forces that are at work in that society. For instance, I believe that the play, *Ngaahika Ndeenda*, was very popular because it talked about the extreme poverty of the people. I believe the play was popular because it talked about landlessness in our country. I believe the play was popular because it talked about the betrayal of the peasants and workers by the political "big-wigs." I believe the play was popular because it talked about the arrogance and the greed of the powerful and the wealthy. Again, I believe the play was popular because it depicted the true conditions of the rural people in the rural villages. (Thiong'o, "Ngugi wa Thiong'o Still" 95)

Ngũgĩ's remarks highlight the importance of language in building national theatre and literature. By claiming that accurate representation in these domains can only be realised through national languages, he emphasises the importance of literature and theatre reflecting the everyday lives and sociopolitical realities of the people depicted. According to Ngũgĩ, the play's appeal stems from its realistic portrayal of rural life and the systemic exploitation and corruption that regular people confront. This method not only underlines his dedication to cultural and linguistic authenticity, but it also demonstrates how literature can be an effective vehicle for critique of society and political analysis.

According to Ngũgĩ, *I Will Marry*'s public accessibility during the entire production process, open script readings, and utilisation of peasants in the performing are noteworthy aspects of the play's collective endevaours ("We" 146). Furthermore, he contends that the peasants' active participation in the play—writing parts of the script and attending performances at Kamĩrĩĩthũ Community Education and Cultural Centre—is the reason why the audience reacts so favourably to it. Ngũgĩ's remarks highlight the play's dedication to interacting with the audience on a deeper level, which is reflected in the production process's incorporation of community involvement and teamwork. This participative method highlights the play's consistency with Fanon's notion of national culture while also facilitating a deeper comprehension of the social and political critique. According to Frantz Fanon, national culture is the result of a collaborative process that reflects and strengthens a people's identity and struggles (*Wretched* 232). When considering Fanon's concept of national culture, which emphasises collaborative work in producing cultural expressions, *I Will Marry* stands out as a powerful example. The collaborative construction of the play at the Kamĩrĩĩthũ Community Education and Cultural Centre, together with the active participation of the peasants, corresponds with Fanon's thesis. The performance successfully engages the audience in comprehending and confronting their sociopolitical circumstances, promoting a sense of togetherness against imperialism and helping to the development of Kenyan national culture.

I Will Marry, unlike Ngũgĩ's earlier play *The Trial*, provides a clearer study of national culture based on Fanon's criteria. While *The Trial* examines the revolutionary struggle against the rule of colonialism, it does so within the confines of a colonial theatre

setting. In contrast, *I Will Marry* is set in an independent Kenya, where the lack of white settlers has resulted in new types of oppression, such as the creation of a black bourgeoisie class. This change offers the opportunity to examine the dynamics of national culture in a postcolonial environment, emphasising the evolving nature of cultural and social conflicts as articulated by Fanon.

As argued in chapter I, the incomplete status of the Mau Mau struggle represents the turbulent time preceding Kenya's eventual independence. Although the Mau Mau movement, symbolised by the execution of Dedan Kimathi in 1956, was a watershed moment in Kenyan history, the years preceding up to 1963 were characterised by fierce and brutal conflict. Finally, the Kenyan people gained independence from British domination. However, as Kenya moved from colonial rule to the declaration of independence, the anticipated shift in power dynamics and control did not occur as planned, highlighting complicated issues that continued despite the end of British government (Thiong'o, "We" 137). Young's assessment of the paradoxical loss of power in the transition from colonial authority to independence emphasises the contradiction between the reality of post-independence conflicts and the hopes of newly emerging nation. As Young observes,

> [p]aradoxically, in the move between colonial rule and independence an essential factor was lost: agency. Anti-colonial struggles involved the assumption of a new level of agency by colonized people against the conditions in which they lived. Independence was the object of that struggle, and the assumption was that it would fully realize the ideal of self-determination. The reality was not always so simple. Kwame Nkrumah, for example, the man who had been able to transform the politics of Ghana and pressurize the British into leaving without a single shot being fired, found that with independence, in many ways his power was only nominal: he had political power, but he did not gain control of the economy. (Young 45)

The appearance of freedom concealed the white coloniser's continuous power through economic systems that they dominated. As a result, newly independent states found themselves in a neo-colonial dilemma. While the indigenous population had previously been exploited by white colonisers during traditional colonialism, the post-independence period saw the rise of a native bourgeoisie, which maintained the exploitation cycle (Rabaka 267). This change represents a continuation of colonial dynamics, in which oppressors are replaced but control and subjugation mechanisms

remain in place, maintaining the disparities that the struggle for freedom attempted to eliminate.

The continuation of power and exploitation is central to Kwame Nkrumah's definition of neo-colonialism. According to Nkrumah, "the essence of neo-colonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality, its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside" (Nkrumah 4). In this perspective, neo-colonialism is a deceitful form of imperialism in which newly independent governments appear to be self-governing but are actually heavily influenced or controlled by foreign powers. These foreign effects frequently show as economic dependence, in which former colonial powers or other powerful nations impose economic policies, restrict trade, and manipulate local economies for their own benefit.

In the context of neo-colonialism, the position of the native bourgeoisie in *I Will Marry* can be understood through Fanon's portrayal of this class as the new guardians of colonial operations. As he puts it, "[t]he national bourgeoisie steps into the shoes of the former European settlement: doctors, barristers, traders, commercial travelers, general agents, and transport agents" (*Wretched* 152). This shift demonstrates how, rather than eliminating colonial structures, the native bourgeoisie simply replaces past colonisers in positions of economic and political authority. Furthermore, the neo-colonial bourgeoisie is frequently "drunken on mimicking the West" (Arditti et al. 342), implying an overt acceptance of Western principles and practices that promotes rather than challenges external powers. Characters in *I Will Marry*, such as Kioi, Jezebel, Ndugire, Helen, and Ikuua, demonstrate this tendency by adopting their colonial counterparts' roles and attitudes, thus sustaining the neo-colonial status quo. Their acts demonstrate how, rather than leading a genuine break from colonial exploitation, the indigenous bourgeoisie becomes involved in sustaining a system that benefits foreign interests while undermining the revolutionary principles of self-determination and true independence. Thus, "the content" of *I Will Marry* "is the evolutionary history of oppression in Kenya from foreign masters to native masters […] So past, present, and future are linked in a chain of sorrows in which the future will be worse than the present just as the present is worse than the past" in the play (Ukpokodu 32).

The characters Kioi and Ikuua in *I Will Marry* represent the native bourgeoisie who work with foreigners to continue exploitation. These rich natives, Kioi and Ikuua, want to build a foreign-owned insecticide factory that will burden poor neighbourhoods while having the least negative effect on affluent neighbourhoods (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 75-76). That is why they intend to deceive Kiguunda and seize his land, which is in an underprivileged neighbourhood (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 75-76). The fact that the toxic pollutants from this factory are primarily meant to hurt the poor people shows how postcolonial Kenya's economic structure still favours the rich. Rather than explicitly imposing control, colonisers coerce native elites into maintaining the economic and social systems that emerged during colonial rule. This scenerio supports Amilcar Cabral's remark that colonial domination not only suppresses the cultural life of the colonised, but also causes cultural estrangement and social divisions (*Return* 45). Cabral observes that colonisers widen the distance between indigenous elites and the rest of the community, frequently through assimilation or other types of division. In *I Will Marry*, Kioi, Jezebel, Ndugire, Helen, and Ikuua, who represent the assimilated native bourgeoisie, reflect this phenomenon. They have absorbed the coloniser's mindset, believing themselves to be superior to their own people and discarding their cultural norms. Their acts contribute to the continuation of colonial exploitation through a new type of internal oppression in which local elites, rather than colonisers, sustain and exacerbate social and economic inequities. This aspiration to emulate the values of the foreigners aligns closely with Fanon's concept of the first stage of native consciousness, assimilation. In Fanon's framework, the first stage is characterized by a desire for assimilation into the colonial culture, where the native seeks to adopt the values, behaviors, and social norms of the colonisers as a means of gaining acceptance and status (Fanon, *Wretched* 222).

I Will Marry's stark contrast between the affluent and assimilated Kiois[26] and the impoverished and patriotic Kiguundas echoes Fanon's depiction of the colonisers' privileged quarters and the natives' deprived areas, reflecting the continuation of colonial-era disparities in a neo-colonial context. Fanon, in the chapter "Concerning Violence" of *The Wretched of the Earth*, illustrates how the colonisers' town is built

[26] The name "Kiois" is used to refer to the wealthy native Kioi and his allies, Jezebel, Ndugire, Helen and Ikuua; whereas "Kiguundas" is used to refer to the impoverished native Kiguunda and his wife, Wangeci.

with wealth and luxury, a place of cleanliness, order, and privilege, in stark opposition to the poverty, and overcrowded conditions of the native town. Kiguunda's house is representative of the "native town" that Fanon describes (*Wretched* 39). The house is small and deteriorating, with fading walls, ragged clothing, and few belongings (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 3). Gathoni (the daughter of Kiguunda) sleeps on a pile of clothes on the floor due to the family's tough living conditions, and the house itself is a reflection of their fight to survive (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 3). A title-deed for a tiny parcel of land (one and a half acres), the family's most treasured property, is displayed noticeably on the wall, signifying their fragile claim to durability and honour in a world that offers them absolutely nothing more (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 3).

In contrast, Kioi's residence reflects the "settler's town," although they are the black bourgeoisie who have taken on the role of colonisers (*Wretched* 39). Their home is spacious, well-furnished, and equipped with luxuries such as sofa seats, a television, electric lighting and "[o]n one wall can be seen a board with the words: 'CHRIST IS THE HEAD OF THIS HOUSE, THE UNSEEN GUEST AT EVERY MEAL, THE SILENT LISTENER TO EVERY CONVERSATION'. There is also a picture of a hairy Nebuchadnezzar turned into an animal" (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 74-75). The table is piled high with food, and the general atmosphere is one of abundance and ease, similar to the settlers' town that Fanon characterises as "well-fed," with "the belly [...] always full of good things" (*Wretched* 39). The presence of a servant at the dining table highlights the family's prosperity and status, in stark contrast to the Kiguundas' struggle to provide even basic seats for themselves and their guests (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 74-75). According to Adedipe and Babayeju, the images of luxury, comfort, and Christian inscriptions on the walls of Kioi's residence reflect the settlers' sense of superiority and entitlement, which is reinforced by their physical separation from the poorer local regions (7).

Extreme distinctions between the Kioi and Kiguunda families not only represent the centuries-old divisions of colonialism, but also point to deeper metaphorical themes. The contrast between their living conditions and lifestyles highlights a greater critique of assimilation, which is further strengthened by the "picture of a hairy Nebuchadnezzar turned into an animal" (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 74-75). A major motif in Christian allegory is the narrative of Nebuchadnezzar, an ancient Babylonian king, especially his

punishment for having excessive amount of pride (Nelson, “Daniel 5:1-3”). It serves to highlight the dangers of arrogance and the results of rejecting divine authority. Nebuchadnezzar’s transformation into a beast in the Bible following his haughty boasting about his power is a powerful illustration of how pride may ultimately lead to one’s demise (Nelson, “Daniel 5:1-3”). This parable highlights the futility of worldly power when it clashes with heavenly will, in addition to providing a moral lesson on the dangers of arrogance. Nebuchadnezzar’s transformation into an animal serves as a potent metaphor for how those who put themselves above others—particularly by denying their own culture and identity—end up being humbled.

The picture of Nebuchadnezzar in animal form that hangs on the Kioi family’s wall has more meaning when considered in the context of their assimilated family (Mĩriĩ and Thiong’o 74-75). The Kiois represent the same audacity and arrogance that ultimately brought about Nebuchadnezzar’s ruin since they have disassociated themselves from their own Kenyan roots and despise their people. They metaphorically join Nebuchadnezzar’s fate, where their endeavour to elevate themselves by imitating the colonisers only results in their dehumanisation, by assimilating European culture and ideals at the price of their own. Nebuchadnezzar’s hideous appearance thus represents Kiois’ own identity crisis and rejection of their cultural heritage, acting as a sobering reminder of the disastrous course they are taking. In this sense, Nebuchadnezzar’s story and the Kioi family’s assimilation are inextricably linked, with the former serving as a cautionary tale about the dangers of abandoning one’s identity and people in pursuit of superficial power and rank. As a result of the Kioi’s rejection of their cultural history in favour of imitating their colonisers, they become alienated from their community and lose their sense of self since they only associate mainly with outsiders or other assimilated individuals. Their disconnection from their own native people is strengthened by this chosen association, which further distances them from their origins. By use of this comparison, the story emphasises what Fanon and Cabral both imply: that individuals who excessively conform to the methods of the white man run the risk of losing their identity, culture, and sense of community (Fanon, *Wretched* 58; Cabral, *Return* 47). They contend that putting external status ahead of cultural authenticity causes alienation on both a social and a personal basis, which in turn breaks the bonds that unite a person with their identity and community.

The social and cultural differences between the two families are further highlighted by the interactions that take place when the Kiois pay the Kiguundas a visit. The Kiois' obvious discomfort from the smoke from Githeri, a traditional Kenyan meal of beans and maize, is reflected in their contempt for Kenyan food, as evidenced by their exaggerated sneezing and coughing (Otieno 141; Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 42). In a similar vein, Helen's sarcastic and rude reaction to the smell of Githeri coming from Kiguunda's garments, as she turns her nose up in disgust, reveals a larger disrespect for traditional practices and local meals (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 81). Due to their adoption of the colonisers' lifestyle and sense of superiority to other Kenyans, Kioi's actions demonstrate their perception of their own culture as inferior to that of the West. This disdainful mindset is consistent with Fanon's portrayal of the assimilationist native, who, having embraced the colonisers' ways, despises their own culture and people while attempting to improve their lot in life by becoming more Westernised.

Furthermore, while discussing a tractor driver who works on Kioi's farm, it is revealed that the land, which was once owned by white colonisers, is now owned by Kioi, who previously worked alongside them (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 44). The change in ownership exemplifies a bigger metaphor: just as Kenya was formerly under colonial rule, this farm was once under coloniser administration, and it has now passed into the hands of Kioi, who works with Westerners. This change metaphorically implies that Kenya's government has likewise shifted to native elites who work with Western forces. The talk among the Kiois reflects a colonial attitude. Jezebel praises a tractor driver for being mature, not arguing, not demanding more money, and praising Christ (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 44). This suggests that a native who follows these standards and does not fight against the colonial structure is regarded as a good native and is favoured by pro-Western Kiois. Also, Ndugire argues that embracing Christianity will resolve conflict in these areas (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 44). These statements suggest that Kiois, like white colonisers, continues colonial-era customs and perpetuates the settler/native dichotomy. The Kiois continue to run their farms in ways that replicate the exploitative techniques of the colonisers. For example, the farm's management replicates traditional plantation practices in which local people are subjected to low wages and bad working conditions, while the Kiois, who serve as the new landlords, enjoy the majority of the advantages of their labour.

As an outcome, *I Will Marry* effectively depicts Fanon's first stage of native behaviour—assimilation—by transposing the colonial contradictions into a neo-colonial environment. As Bazimaziki and Nsengiyumva summarise, "[w]hile [Kiguundas] were expecting to enjoy the independence, the situation stands that they are still living in poverty, living on their only land, yet owned by Kioi. […] They are victims of the evils left behind by colonialism and that independence did not address as expected" (9). Thus, the Kioi family and their allies embody the assimilationist stage by adopting colonisers' norms and privileges, repeating the cycle of exploitation and oppression that they formerly exposed to.

Wangeci and Kiguunda, the main couple in *I Will Marry*, represent a surprising departure from Frantz Fanon's usual conceptualisation of the stages of native behaviour. While Fanon's theory indicates a linear development from assimilation to rejection and finally to revolution, Wangeci and Kiguunda contradict this actual order by incorporating all three stages in a non-linear manner. This non-chronological portrayal raises crucial considerations concerning the impact of neo-colonialism on indigenous behaviour and consciousness, particularly in the context of newly independent governments still dealing with the after-effects of colonisation. Wangeci and Kiguunda are not, as Fanon would normally classify them, in the early stages of assimilation at the beginning of the play. Rather, they start at the third level, representing the revolutionary natives who are acutely conscious of the negative consequences of both colonialism and neo-colonialism. Their confrontational resistance to the repressive systems that endure even after independence identifies them as characters who have already experienced the first two phases of behaviour and consciousness. Their comprehension of the fragile nature of their nation's independence and the continuous exploitation carried out under the pretence of neo-colonialism is evident. With this critical understanding, they firmly assume the role of revolutionary natives, opposing both the new elite that is carrying on the colonial legacy and the colonial powers.

Wangeci's cynical remark, "[t]he difference between then and now is this! / We now have our independence!" combined with Kiguunda's grief, "I ran away from coldland only to find myself in frostland!" strongly conveys frustration with neo-colonialism (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 19). This dialogue demonstrates a high level of understanding

about the ongoing exploitation and systemic flaws that exist despite formal independence. Wangeci's statement emphasises the surface character of the changes brought about by independence, implying that the promised freedom has not resulted in actual betterment or autonomy. Her sarcasm highlights the contrast between the idealised concept of independence and the reality of ongoing socioeconomic and political struggles. Kiguunda's metaphor of moving from "coldland" to "frostland" emphasises that, while the rule of colonisers has ended, the new sociopolitical order continues to subject them to severe conditions, suggesting a transition from one type of oppression to another. This metaphor encapsulates the heart of neo-colonial critique, emphasising how colonial exploitation persists under new forms. Together, these statements reflect a sophisticated critique of neo-colonialism, demonstrating the characters' deep understanding of how independence has failed to deliver true liberation and how neo-colonial forces continue to perpetuate inequalities, thereby representing an awakened third-stage (revolutionary) native.

When Kiguunda receives a letter alerting him that affluent local elites, Ikuua wa Nditika and Kioi wa Kanoru, in partnership with foreign firms, intend to buy his land to create a factory, he and Wangeci become suspicious. They recognise that the new factory to be erected, allegedly aiming to make insecticides, is a weapon for foreign forces to continue exploiting their land, with the help of local collaborators. The factory's aim, to create bedbug insecticide, becomes a metaphor for neo-colonial forces that seek to cleanse the land of its original owners in the name of progress, as Wangeci asserts:

> Aren't [Ikuua and Kioi] the real bedbugs,
> Local watchmen for foreign robbers?
> When they see a poor man's property their mouths water,
> When they get their own, their mouths dry up!
> Don't they have any lands
> They can share with these foreigners
> Whom they have invited back into the country
> To desecrate the land? (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 31)

Wangeci's reaction, in which she figuratively refers to the local elites as "real bedbugs," captures the essence of Fanon's third stage. She recognises that these collaborators, by inviting outsiders back into the country to exploit the land, are betraying their own people for personal benefit. This realisation represents the revolutionary native's recognition that the struggle is not only against foreign colonisers, but also against those

in their own community who unite with external powers for profit (Fanon, *Wretched* 235). By recognising these local directors as actual parasites, Wangeci exposes people who should be safeguarding the nation's principles and resources as traitors. Wangeci's claim that these local elites drool over the poor's property while hoarding their own wealth is a clear critique of the neo-colonial bourgeoisie, who have replaced the colonial masters and "[provide] a useful buffer between the white colonial leaders and the black laboring class" (Harmon 60). This is consistent with Fanon's theory that the revolutionary native speaks for the people and acts as a mobilising force, revealing continued injustice and encouraging others to resist. Wangeci's statements are not only an attack on individual selfishness, but also a wider critique of the systematic exploitation enabled by people who have abandoned their nation's desire for true independence.

In a different scene, Kiguunda becomes enraged when he receives a visit from Kioi, his wife Jezebel, Ndugire and his wife Helen, who denounce his marriage to Wangeci, stating that it is sinful as they are not Christians and have not received baptism (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 43-50). The comment made by Helen, "[c]ome out of the muddy trough of sins!" is especially damaging to Kiguunda, who wed Wangeci in accordance with customary Kenyan marriage practices (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 48). Kiguunda is pushed to the brink by the pro-Western Kiois' apparent disrespect and mockery of his culture, religion, and way of life, and as a result, he fiercely opposes their intrusion in his own home. Kiguunda, a conscious revolutionary native, exclaims, "[e]very home has its own head, and no outsider should interfere in other people's homes!" "[g]o away, you devils!" (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 50) This is a direct affirmation of his independence and refusal to let outside forces control his life. His statement, "[e]very home has its own head," is an open criticism of the Kiois' worldview, referring to a sign in their home that reads, "'CHRIST IS THE HEAD OF THIS HOUSE, THE UNSEEN GUEST AT EVERY MEAL, THE SILENT LISTENER TO EVERY CONVERSATION'" (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 74-75). Kiguunda's staunch rejection of this imposed hierarchy echoes Fanon's observation that "[t]he native intellectual nevertheless sooner or later will realize that you do not show proof of your nation from its culture but that you substantiate its existence in the fight which the people wage against the forces of occupation" (Fanon, *Wretced* 223). This scene emphasises the rage and resistance that

define the third stage of native awareness. Whereas such a vehement rejection of colonial values may have been subdued or hidden in the first and second stages, Kiguunda's hate speech against neo-colonial forces and their local collaborators emerges clearly and forcefully in the third stage, demonstrating his and Wangeci's fully awakened revolutionary positions. As assimilationist natives, the Kioi family imposes Western values and religious standards, which stand in stark contrast to Wangeci and Kiguunda's revolutionary personalities. The Kioi family perpetuates colonialism by becoming neo-colonial oppressors, whilst Wangeci and Kiguunda protect their independence and cultural resistance—at least for now.

Instead of making a clear and linear progression, Wangeci and Kiguunda undergo a sharp regress, and their status as third-stage natives starts to fade. They fall back into the initial stage of native awareness when they are faced with the harsh realities of their socio-economic circumstances and the cunning strategies of the new ruling class. The emergence of a new master undermines their revolutionary posture and compels them to face their weakness and disillusionment, which can be interpreted as a response to the crushing constraints of neo-colonialism. After their initial sense of confidence is crushed the characters experience a feeling of bewilderment and hopelessness towards their own cultures, reminiscent of the assimilationist era they were supposed to have left behind.

Wangeci starts to retreat from the third stage of native awareness when she misinterprets the visit from Kioi and his companions, thinking their goal to convert her and Kiguunda to Christianity is based on a desire to create a familial link through marriage. Kiguunda also holds this mistake, believing that Kioi's son wants to wed their daughter, which makes him think that the conversion request is a step towards making this marriage official (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 53-54). But the truth is far more subtle: Kioi's main goal is not to build family relationships but rather to impose Western standards, rob them of their traditional identity, and eventually take their land for profit. This dishonest manoeuvre by Kioi and his group represents the endurance of colonial techniques, in which the promise of assimilation and upward mobility is merely a ruse for prolonged dominance and resource exploitation. Gicaamba and Njooki warn Wangeci and Kiguunda about Kioi's true objectives, implying that the conversion offer

may not be as innocent as it appears (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 56). However, Wangeci and Kiguunda, deluded by the prospect of a beneficial alliance, disregard his fears. They fail to recognise Kioi's real motives, and how he means to deceive them into leaving their cultural origins rather than sincerely wanting a marriage alliance. Their reluctance to heed Gicaamba's warnings represents a big step backward, as they incorrectly believe that the conversion request will provide a rich future for their daughter. As Wangeci states:

> Let us go to Kioi's place early tomorrow morning.
> Let's go and tell him that we agree with his plans.
> His words are good.
> His ways are straight.
> His style of life is proper.
> His church is holy.
> His church shows us the only way to life and happiness.
> Gicaamba's words arise out of envy. (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 73-74)

Wangeci's statements represent a significant regression into the assimilation stage, in which the influence of colonialism reappears and destroys her formerly rebellious stance. Her enthusiasm to embrace Kioi's ambitions, despite his false motives, suggests a return to the mindset that associates the coloniser's way of life with success and legitimacy. The statements "[h]is ways are straight" and "[h]is church shows us the only way to life and happiness" depict Wangeci's internalisation of colonial ideas, as she learns to idealise Western lifestyles and religious practices that were previously unfamiliar to her. This shift demonstrates a lack of critical awareness as well as a desire to conform to the new ruling class's expectations, both of which are characteristic of the assimilation stage of Fanon (*Wretched* 222). Furthermore, Wangeci's reaction to Gicaamba and Njooki's warnings aligns with Amílcar Cabral's thesis of assimilation, which suggests that assimilation leads to alienation from one's culture and community (Cabral, "Return" 47). Wangeci's hasty dismissal of Gicaamba and Njooki, friends who have always supported each other in all senses, demonstrates the alienating effects of assimilation. Wangeci begins to consider her actual friends as obstacles rather than sources of support as she prioritises Kiois' acceptance and views them as possible allies.

In a pivotal scene in *I Will Marry*, the transformation of Kiguunda and Wangeci's home into a duplicate of the Kiois' house powerfully depicts their descent into the first stage of native consciousness, characterised by Fanon as assimilation and the embrace of

colonial ideas. The once humble and culturally rooted area is now overflowing with Western-style furnishings, religious symbols, and the noticeable absence of the title deed, which once indicated their connection to the land and national culture (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 91). The removal of the title deed, and its replacement by a Christian board represents their loss of cultural identity and autonomy in favour of adhering to colonial standards. The inscription "'CHRIST IS THE HEAD OF THIS HOUSE, THE UNSEEN GUEST AT EVERY MEAL, THE SILENT LISTENER TO EVERY CONVERSATION'" depicts their spiritual and cultural obedience to the coloniser's faith, emphasising their separation from their roots (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 91). The portrait of the animalistic Nebuchadnezzar hanging on the wall in Kiguunda's home, which is identical to the one at Kioi's home, has a profound symbolic significance (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 91). Nebuchadnezzar is frequently connected with imperial authority, conquest, and supremacy in biblical and historical contexts. By showing this artwork, Kiguunda and Wangeci unknowingly embrace the emblems of imperial authority and control that Nebuchadnezzar represents, emphasising the underlying arrogance and the ultimate result of denial of native self. Kiguunda and Wangeci's fulfilment in obtaining these worldly items, as well as their desire to emulate the Kiois' lifestyle, demonstrate a deep internalisation of colonial principles. This transition indicates a return to the early stages of native awareness, in which colonised people strive to be like the coloniser, believing that doing so will lead to social advancement and acceptability. This regression is more than just a physical modification of their home; it is also a psychological and ideological surrender, in which they relinquish the revolutionary consciousness they formerly possessed in favour of inclusion.

Furthermore, when Kiguunda decides to use his one and a half acres of property as security for a bank loan to buy new furnishings and plan a Christian wedding, he effectively gives up not only ownership of the land but also the dignity it represents. This land, a symbol of his personality and freedom, is given up in favour of money gain and social conformity (Tshering and Chitra 146). By doing so, Kiguunda violates the Mau Mau oath he once took as a revolutionary third-stage native, demonstrating that he has become an assimilationist native. Kiguunda's acts represent a tragic regression in which the pressures of neo-colonialism and the seduction of the coloniser's values cause him to abandon the same principles he once stood for. He violates the spirit of the Mau

Mau oath—"I will never sell land to any white man..." (Barnett and Njama 132)—as well as one of Fanon's key imperatives—"a continual struggle against colonialism in its new forms" (Fanon, *Wretched* 235). In this sense, Kiguunda's decision to sell the land represents not only the loss of property, but also the surrender of his revolutionary beliefs.

Finally, Wangeci and Kiguunda put on their beautiful attire and begin envisioning a Christian wedding in their home (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 93). As stated, identifying with the Kiois suggests that they have adopted colonial beliefs and habits, causing them to lose touch with their traditional identity. This scene highlights Wangeci and Kiguunda's loss of cultural origins and adoption of Western standards and traditions. The daughter's surprise at seeing her parents imitate or imagine a Christian wedding demonstrates how profound and dramatic this shift is and that their transformation from the third stage, revolutionary native, to the first stage, assimilationist native is highly recognisable (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 96-97). As opposed to Kiguundas' imaginary wedding, Njooki describes her own traditional Kenyan wedding, full of captivating dances and songs, to demonstrate that a truly enchanting celebration does not necessarily require Christianity (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 64-67). The disparity between Kiguunda's Christian wedding, represented through mime, and Gicaamba's traditional wedding, which is celebrated with the vibrant native elements of song and dance, implies that the Christian wedding is an imposed event that lacks the genuine cultural symbols and connections that define the traditional Kenyan ceremony (Chakraborty 770). In this context, the occurrences clearly demonstrate Fanon's concept of assimilation, in which the loss of cultural identity causes individuals to increasingly mimic the coloniser's behaviours and values, resulting in a growing disconnection from their own national culture and traditions (*Wretched* 222). As a result, Wangeci and Kiguunda are portrayed in parts of the play as embodying the first stage of native consciousness, acting like natives yet mirroring the coloniser's features.

The transformation of these two characters does not finish with them becoming first stagers; they continue to change. Wangeci and Kiguunda visit Kioi's home after learning that Gathoni is pregnant with Kioi's son's child (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 100-101). Kiguundas insist that their children shall marry. At this point, the Kiguundas are hoping

for acceptance, believing that their common Christian faith will bridge the gap between them and the Kiois. However, the scenario grows increasingly complex. The Kiois accuse the Kiguundas of failing to support their daughters and completely reject the marriage proposal. When Kioi rejects the concept of marriage, the Kiguundas turn to the judicial system to protect their rights. Kioi's mocking response: "We shall see on whose side the law is! Your side or our side!" (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 101) emphasises the stark reality: despite their efforts to integrate and their shared religion, the Kiguundas are confronted with established biases and will never attain full equality. As Memmi points out, assimilation is more than just abandoning one's own group; it also entails attempting to enter the coloniser's sphere, which is frequently met with rejection (168). Memmi contends that no matter how much the colonised try to resemble the coloniser, their efforts are regarded with scorn from the colonial powers (168). The colonised just end up adopting a new, disparaged trait: being regarded as ridiculous. They cannot fully integrate with or accurately duplicate the coloniser's role. This demonstrates that the Kiguundas' attempts to integrate with the Kiois by adopting their religion and seeking acceptance are ultimately unsuccessful and rejected, confirming the long-standing division and their status as outsiders.

Their journey, however, does not result in defeat. Wangeci and Kiguunda eventually progress to the second stage, which is rejection, according to Fanon. They begin to actively oppose the new forms of oppression that have replaced the colonial order. This progression to the second stage, following their decline, is significant because it emphasises the nonlinear and cyclical nature of their fight. Their story exemplifies the difficult realities of postcolonial cultures, where the route to true liberty is riddled with setbacks and hardships that can cause even the most steadfast individuals to stumble.

Kiguunda becomes enraged when Kioi criticises his daughter Gathoni, calling her a whore and claiming that Kioi's son may only marry a "mature" Christian lady, who cannot be Kiguunda's daughter Gathoni (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 101). These insults are the last straw for Kiguunda's patience, driving him to act more decisively than ever before. Kiguunda surrounds Kioi with his sword, which he brought with him, and pushes him against the ground. This is the point at which Kiguunda's fury and frustration boil over. He compels Kioi to crawl on all fours while mockingly telling him, "Christ is

watching," comparing Kioi to Nebuchadnezzar, who was converted into an animal as a result of his sins (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 101-102). Kiguunda is venting all of the fury that has been building up inside him for years by humiliating Kioi, as well as recovering his own dignity. This occurrence marks Kiguunda's shift into the second stage, in which he rediscovers his own identity and dignity. He evolves into a man capable of opposing Kioi and the repressive forces he represents, rather than bowing down to them. This move might be interpreted as Kiguunda's act of both self-defence and rebellion against all of his previous humiliations. Kiguunda takes a significant step towards breaking free from his previous submissive state and restoring his dignity and individuality as a Kenyan.

Kiguunda's highly humiliating treatment of Kioi, whom he had saw as a prospective economic partner over the land, symbolises a significant and symbolic break with his colonially driven ambitions. Kiguunda first saw collaboration with Kioi as a way to raise his status, align with the colonial power structure, and protect his position within the colonisers' socioeconomic hierarchy. This collaboration, centred on land—a powerfully symbolic and contentious asset in colonial Kenya—embodied Kiguunda's previous readiness to cooperate with the coloniser's system, which promised material benefit in exchange for cultural and ideological conformity. However, as Kiguunda's consciousness evolves, he begins to recognise the actual nature of Kioi and the colonial system he symbolises. Kiguunda's transition from perceiving Kioi as a business partner to treating him with absolute disdain exemplifies Fanon's concept of "going native," in which the colonised individual rejects the previously accepted superficial "Wings" (*Wretched* 221)—those trappings of colonial respectability and assimilation. Kiguunda consciously abandons any pretence of meeting the coloniser's expectations at this point. By treating Kioi with such contempt, he metaphorically chops off his wings, rejecting the illusory alliance and the colonial values it represented. Kiguunda reverts to his roots, to the raw and unpolished character that the coloniser has always attempted to repress. In this act of humiliation, Kiguunda becomes "unrecognisable" to both the coloniser and his previous self—the version of himself who had sought recognition through alliance with colonial power (*Wretched* 221). He now completely embraces his role as a native, as Fanon characterises it, unafraid to defy the imposed standards and restore his dignity via rebellion. This return to his own people, to his cultural history and beliefs, shows a

strong rejection of colonial assimilation, which had previously seduced him. Kiguunda reclaims his own identity by treating Kioi with contempt, while simultaneously exposing the hollowness of the colonial values that Kioi represents.

In response to Kiguunda's sword, Jezebel draws a gun, leading to a confrontation between the gun and the sword (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 103). In this setting, Kiguunda's sword represents local culture and traditional values, whereas Jezebel's gun represents colonial culture and missionary influence. The battle between the pistol and the sword shows the conflict between these two opposed forces (Bazimaziki and Nsengiyumva 9). This incident successfully reintroduces the larger dispute between the two groups, with Kioi and Kiguunda representing opposite sides: Kioi represents colonial and missionary interests, while Kiguunda represents indigenous resistance and cultural legacy. The standoff highlights the continual battle between the native and colonial worlds, illustrating the fundamental tensions and conflicts that exist in their relationships in neo-colonial Kenya.

The drastic alterations that had previously taken place are noticeably reversed in the scene that takes place in Kiguunda's house approximately two weeks later (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 103). Now that the majority of the new belongings has been removed, the house is back to how it was, signifying a dramatic change in Kiguunda's situation and perspective. This turnabout is a representation of Kiguunda's struggle to recover his honour and reject the colonial and shallow ideals that had briefly shaped him. Kiguunda's act of destroying the Nebuchadnezzar painting and removing the sign bearing the words "Christ is the Head" emphasise this restoration of dignity even more (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 110). In addition to rejecting the foreign beliefs and authority these symbols stand for, Kiguunda confirms his own cultural identity and autonomy by smashing these emblems which represent colonial and missionary imposition. Kiguunda, in this sense, is representative of Fanon's second stage rejectionist native (*Wretched* 221).

As stated, the non-linear development of Wangeci and Kiguunda in terms of the development of their national culture implies that the stages of native consciousness are flexible and adaptive to the shifting dynamics of oppression and power in the context of neo-colonialism, rather than strictly sequential. The psychological and emotional cost

that neo-colonialism has on people is demonstrated by Wangeci and Kiguunda's decline from the third stage to the first stage and their subsequent ascent to the second level. It also highlights how challenging it is to maintain a revolutionary consciousness in the face of changing exploitation and control mechanisms of colonialism. To sum up, the journey of Wangeci and Kiguunda in *I Will Marry* is a potent example of the difficulties involved in postcolonial identity and resistance in developing their own national culture. They represent the destabilising consequences of neo-colonialism and the difficulties of navigating a world where the old colonial powers have been substituted by new rulers, through their non-chronological embodiment of Fanon's stages in the formation of a national culture.

In *I Will Marry*, the characters Gicaamba and Njooki represent Frantz Fanon's concept of the revolutionary native intellectual in the third stage of native consciousness. Fanon refers to this stage as the "fighting phase," in which the native intellectual rejects earlier stages of assimilation and passive resistance (rejection) and emerges as a force of active opposition against colonial oppression (*Wretched* 222). These intellectuals are more than just contemplative or passive commentators; they are "awakener[s] of the people," catalysing revolutionary activity and shaping a new national consciousness (*Wretched* 223). Gicaamba and Njooki are characterised from the start of the play as unwaveringly aware of the risks posed by colonial and neo-colonial forces, and they immediately recognise the threat posed by the native bourgeoisie, represented by the wealthy Kioi family. Initially, Gicaamba and Njooki had a close relationship with their neighbours, Wangeci and Kiguunda, since, at the outset of the play, Wangeci and Kiguunda embody the consciousness of the third-stage indigenous intellectual. The four characters meet frequently, and their beliefs converge as they unite to resist colonial exploitation. However, when the Kioi family, who represent the native bourgeoisie in cooperation with colonial interests, begins to pay frequent visits to Wangeci and Kiguunda, Gicaamba and Njooki get concerned. They realise that their neighbours are unaware of Kioi's actual aim, so they decide to enlighten and warn them (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 32-42). Their attempts to warn their neighbours, the Kiguunda family, exemplify Fanon's revolutionary native intellectual's role in active resistance (*Wretched* 223).

The revolutionary mindset is amply demonstrated in Njooki's conversation with Wangeci. Njooki is not just sceptical when she questions Kioi's visit, but also conscious about the more profound consequences of the rich-poor interaction. Her caution, "[r]ich families marry from rich families, / The poor from the poor!" (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 32) sums up the socioeconomic divisions generated by colonial and neo-colonial pressures in a straightforward and simple manner. According to Chakraborty, "[m]arriage is […] represented as a means by which the moneyed class maintains and expands its power" and Njooki is highly conscious about this (761). Moreover, Njooki's provocative question, "[j]ust passing by? I wonder. Since when have rich men been known to visit their servants?" (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 32) severely criticises the unequal power dynamics and highlights the idea that you cannot be equal to them—you are their servants. These statements exemplify Njooki's acute awareness of social inequities, and the manipulation tactics used by the wealthy, who, in this context, represent the native bourgeoisie complicit with colonial powers. Njooki's remarks are a call to action as much as a reflection of social observation; she exhorts her neighbours to see the truth of their exploitation and to rise above the delusion of colonial generosity.

Wangeci, a deceived native, says the Christian church is becoming more inclusive, citing innovations such as the inclusion of drums and guitars and the adoption of traditional tunes (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 59-60). However, Njooki immediately dispels this illusion with her response:

> Yes!
> But the song is the same song...
> The word the same word...
> The aim the same!
> And the intentions are still the same! (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 59-60).

Njooki's claim that "the song is the same" implies that, despite the church's efforts to look more culturally welcoming, its primary objective remains unchanged: maintain the status quo and subjugate the oppressed. Her statement demonstrates her acute knowledge of how the native bourgeoisie, partnered with colonial powers, uses cultural adaptation to conceal their continuous exploitation.

In a similar vein, Gicaamba's criticism of Christianity as "the poison of the mind" and "the alcohol of the soul" directly challenges the colonial instruments of power (Mĩriĩ

and Thiong'o 61-62). His discourse is closely in line with Fanon's conception of the third-stage intellectual, one who employs words to inspire the oppressed rather than satisfy the coloniser (*Wretched* 223). Gicaamba's speech is revolutionary literature in action—it rejects the colonial narrative and reclaims the narrative for the people, emphasising the exploitation of the masses by a small group of elites in collusion with foreign powers. Furthermore, Gicaamba engages in an extensive talk with Kiguunda, which goes beyond the usual boundaries of dialogue and functions more as a profound act of teaching. In this prolonged discussion, Gicaamba not only expresses his dissatisfaction with the current socioeconomic realities, but also attempts to educate Kiguunda about the structural inequities that have led to their difficult living conditions. The discussion allows Gicaamba to impart his revolutionary views while also galvanising Kiguunda into a more in-depth knowledge of their united struggle, which goes:

> If you want to rob a monkey of a baby it is holding
> You must first throw it a handful of peanuts.
> We the workers are like that monkey
> When they want to steal our labour
> They bribe us with a handful of peanuts.
> We are the people who cultivate and plant
> But we are not the people who harvest!
> The owners of these companies are real scorpions.
> They know three things only:
> To oppress workers,
> To take away their rights,
> And to suck their blood. (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 33)

Gicaamba's lengthy speech exemplifies Fanon's concept of the third stage, in which the indigenous intellectual "feel[s] the need to speak to their nation, to compose the sentence which expresses the heart of the people, and to become the mouthpiece of a new reality in action" (*Wretched* 223). Gicaamba's aggressive words are a direct challenge to the capitalism and colonial structures that exploit the working class. By stating that "wages can never equal the work done" and comparing workers to a monkey distracted by "a handful of peanuts," he underlines the colonial economy's enormous imbalances and exploitation. This speech also supports Fanon's claim that "[t]he wealth of the imperial countries is our wealth too" (*Wretched* 102). Gicaamba's description of the capitalist elite as "real scorpions" who "oppress workers, take away their rights, and suck their blood" emphasises the colonisers' riches at the cost of the colonised. His

statement not only exposes labour exploitation, but also serves as a rallying cry for the oppressed, encouraging people to recognise their own worth and reclaim the money that has been unfairly taken from them. Thus, Gicaamba's speech is a clear show of defiance to the power institutions that continue to oppress the indigenous community. It exemplifies the third-stage native intellectual's duty as a people-awakener, utilising language to articulate collective suffering and instill revolutionary consciousness. By framing the workers' struggle in terms of theft and exploitation, Gicaamba frames himself as a people's voice, questioning the legitimacy of the colonial system and asserting the oppressed's right to retrieve stolen resources.

In addition to his verbal opposition to exploitation, Gicaamba's bodily actions during the visit to Kiguunda's home further demonstrate his revolutionary dedication. While Gicaamba and Njooki are visiting Kiguundas' home, the Kioi family arrives, and Gicaamba and Njooki react with firm courage to the presence of Kioi and his crew. As Kioi and the others enter the house and stroll down one side of the room, attempting to avoid direct contact with Gicaamba and Njooki, one of Kioi's companions accidently knocks the title-deed off the wall. This incident passes unnoticed by Kioi's company, who are focused on their seating arrangements and Kiguunda and Wangeci are caught up in the hustle and also fail to see the falling title deed (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 42). However, Gicaamba's reaction is crucial and valuable as he steps forward to pick up the title-deed off the floor, capturing everyone's attention. According to Kenechukwu Peter Chukwumezie, "[t]his signified that Kiguunda was going to lose that land of his to a member of the upper class and it was to be by deceit. Gicaamba picking it up and placing it back to its spot was only to [emphasise] his role in the play as one who would be able to restore the hope their class of proletariats have in their country Kenya" (47). Moreover, Gicaamba exhibits a symbol of reclamation and resistance by picking up the document and replacing it to the wall. This moment emphasises his status as a defender of Kenyan land and rights, since his actions stand in stark contrast to the indifference of Kioi's group and the lack of attention of Kiguunda's family. The title-deed's symbolic meaning[27], representing the ownership of Kenyan land, is brought into focus in this

[27] In Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's works, land consistently symbolises the struggle for independence and self-determination (Ogude 90). According to Tshering and Chitra, however, the title-deed represents more than a mere material asset for Kiguunda. It signifies his power and autonomy, affirming that he is not a

scene. The fact that the title-deed falls to the ground as soon as Kioi's group arrives implies that legal land ownership of Kenya has been disrupted as a result of foreign involvement. The carelessness with which Kioi's group treats the title-deed demonstrates their disdain for the land's true worth and thir engagement in its exploitation. Gicaamba's gesture of picking up and rehanging the title-deed represents his duty as a defender of Kenyan land and a symbol of resistance to colonial and neo-colonial powers. This behaviour is consistent with Fanon's concept of the third stage of native consciousness, in which the native intellectual acts as a leader in the revolution for the land's emancipation, educates the people by opposing those who threaten their rights and sovereignty, and specifically strives to defend their components of national culture.

The consistency of Gicaamba and Njooki makes them especially exemplary of Fanon's third stage. In contrast to other characters in the play, Gicaamba and Njooki maintain their revolutionary attitude without wavering or giving in to the constraints of neo-colonial manipulation. Their steadfast dedication serves as evidence that they have completely internalised the third stage of native consciousness. Rather than being in-between figures, they are fully formed representations of Fanon's ideal revolutionary intellectuals. To sum up, Gicaamba and Njooki represent Fanon's third-stage native intellectuals, who actively oppose colonial and neo-colonial forces and teach people about the ills of any forms of colonialism throughout the play in addition to being aware of them. They truly embody the final phase of the fight for national culture and identity, as Fanon puts it, because their revolutionary consciousness is clear from the beginning and does not alter.

In *I Will Marry*, the characters eloquently depict Kenya's ongoing struggle with neo-colonialism as well as the changing nature of its national culture. The play, set in the post-independence era, depicts how the promised freedom has frequently fallen short, as new forms of exploitation and inequality continue to define Kenyans' lives. This situation exemplifies Frantz Fanon's belief that national culture must be inextricably linked with the struggle for independence. As Fanon asserts, "[a] national culture in

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servant but the master of his own fate (Tshering and Chitra 146). This dual role of land highlights its significance both as a symbol of national liberation and as a marker of personal sovereignty.

underdeveloped countries should therefore take its place at the very heart of the struggle for freedom which these countries are carrying on" (*Wretched* 232). The play emphasises that authentic national culture is more than a collection of traditions; it is actively created by the people's ongoing struggle against new forms of domination and exploitation. *I Will Marry* examines the evolution of Kenyan national culture through the lens of neo-colonial issues such as neo-colonial land ownership, the impact of foreign ideals, and resistance to new kinds of socioeconomic control. The play criticises the superficiality of post-independence growth and emphasises how neo-colonial influences continue to shape the lives of ordinary Kenyans. The characters' experiences, as well as the play's narrative, reflect the ongoing battle for genuine emancipation and the development of a national culture that authentically expresses Kenyan identity, free of colonial and neo-colonial oppressions. With the emergence of neo-colonialism, the imposition of new forms of dominance, as well as the complications imposed by these modern masters, there is confusion and shifts in Fanon's three stages of national culture creation. While neo-colonial dynamics introduce more nuanced and fluctuating forms of representation, it is still possible to trace the development of Kenyan national culture, such as Mau Mau, Dedan Kimathi, Harambee, Land, Languages, Orature, and Theatre, through the challenges and resistances depicted in *I Will Marry*.

In *I Will Marry*, Dedan Kimathi is generally portrayed in songs. One of them goes "[t]he crown of victory should be taken away from traitors / And be handed back to patriots / Like Kimathi's patriotic heroes" (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 12-13). His portrayal through song is critical in advancing the development of Kenyan national culture and directing the protagonists towards the third stage of native awareness as stated by Frantz Fanon. Unlike past portrayals, in which Kimathi's role was intimately linked to the struggle against colonial control, his portrayal in this play represents the persistent spirit of resistance and hope in the face of neo-colonial problems. This is further demonstrated in the character Gicaamba's reflection, in which he describes fleeing to the mountains to join the Mau Mau guerrilla army, led by people such as Waringi and Kimathi. The subsequent battle scenes, in which the Mau Mau defeat British soldiers, as well as the victory songs honouring Kimathi's leadership, demonstrate how the character is inspired by Kimathi's example. As Gicaamba sings, "When our Kimathi ascended the mountains / He asked for strength and courage / To defeat the imperialist enemy" (Mĩriĩ

and Thiong'o 71), it is clear that Kimathi's victory songs serve as both motivation and a memory of the revolutionary battle, Mau Mau. The play emphasises Kimathi's role in inspiring the characters to reach the third stage of Fanon's framework, in which native consciousness evolves into a revolutionary force committed to authentic cultural and political autonomy. The songs are powerful reminders of Kimathi's revolutionary ideals and sacrifices, emphasising the importance of upholding these values in the ongoing struggle against neo-colonial domination. In this context, Kimathi's symbolic presence aids the characters' growth to the revolutionary stage of consciousness, in which they actively define and defend an entirely free Kenyan national culture. Thus, in *I Will Marry*, Dedan Kimathi not only embodies an important aspect of Kenyan national culture, but he also facilitates the characters' progression to the third stage of revolutionary consciousness, which makes him a key figure in the play's depiction of cultural and political resistance.

The play depicts the Mau Mau battle through the actions and motivations of characters who represent the third stage of native consciousness as described by Frantz Fanon. This stage, marked by a revolutionary spirit and a desire to national freedom, is clearly depicted by the characters' participation in rituals and songs that symbolise the Mau Mau resistance's lasting influence. The Mau Mau fight is critical in driving the characters to revolutionary consciousness. The Leader's solemn oath, "I swear by the oath of the masses / And by the blood of the Kenyan people" (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 68), demonstrates a genuine commitment to rejecting foreign dominance and safeguarding national sovereignty. The Leader's statement, which is repeated by everyone, strengthens a common commitment to protecting Kenyan land and culture against external and internal threats. This oath, which rejects the spread of foreign influences and the betrayal of customs and values, is consistent with Fanon's belief that national culture is vitally linked to the battle for liberation and independence.

The Leader's promise, "I'll never let this soil go with foreigners / Leaving the people of Kenya wretched!" (68), exemplifies the fight against neo-colonial exploitation and the commitment to secure the country's future. The accompanying song emphasises the transforming power of the Mau Mau movement. The lyrics "We were not given freedom / We bought it with our blood" (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 71) highlight the sacrifices

made by peasants, workers, and children in the Mau Mau struggle for independence. This song serves as both a salute to the revolutionary spirit and a call to arms, reminding the characters of their part in the ongoing fight against unfair treatment. The song's emphasis on "struggle and fight for our rights / And defend Kenya against internal and foreign exploitation" (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 71) emphasises the ongoing fight against neo-colonial forces, as well as the importance of remaining vigilant in the defence of national interests. Through these depictions, *I Will Marry* places the Mau Mau conflict at the centre of the protagonists' revolutionary awareness. The Mau Mau resistance's rituals and songs shape the protagonists' view of their participation in the continuous struggle for national liberation. By invoking the spirit of the Mau Mau and its revolutionary objectives, this play not only honours the struggle's heritage, but also motivates the characters to embody the third stage of local awareness as they actively combat neo-colonial oppression.

The depiction of the war between Mau Mau fighters and British forces, followed by the Mau Mau's victory and triumphant march while chanting victory songs (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 70), captures the revolutionary spirit reflected by the play's third-stage natives. By dramatising this victory on stage, the play reinforces the Kenyan people's revolutionary will and determination to regain their land and identity from colonial oppression. Additionally, during the performances of the play "some cast members were former Mau Mau fighters" (Koster et al. 84). The presence of Mau Mau veterans in the performance of *I Will Marry* strengthens the play's connection to Kenyan national culture and its revolutionary heritage. By incorporating these former combatants into the performance, the play not only honours the historical struggle for independence, but also adds an honest perspective to its depiction of resistance and liberation. Their presence on stage lends living experience and legitimacy to the portrayal of the Mau Mau's revolutionary aspirations, bridging the gap between past and present battles. The participation of these veterans also emphasises the ongoing fight against neo-colonialism. Their engagement demonstrates how the Mau Mau's revolutionary spirit is not a ghost of the past, but rather an active, living force that informs modern resistance against new forms of exploitation. This relationship is critical in the development of a national culture that is firmly based in the ideas of liberty and self-determination. As a result, the play serves as an effective vehicle for reiterating and reinterpreting the values

of the Mau Mau fight, emphasising the ongoing war for national culture and sovereignty.

Moreover, the concept of "harambee" is fundamental to *I Will Marry*'s portrayal of Kenyan solidarity and collective action, particularly in the context of rejecting neo-colonial exploitation. The play not only revives the revolutionary energy that characterised the Mau Mau movement, but it also emphasises the importance of communal togetherness in the ongoing fight for true independence and social justice (Tshering and Chitra 146). The drama, through the characters of Kiguunda and Gicaamba, who represent Fanon's the third-stage, revolutionary native, demonstrates how the "harambee" culture can be a strong instrument in mobilising the masses to resist both internal and external oppressive powers. Gicaamba's speech, in which he appeals for unity and organisation, clearly connects with the notion of "harambee" as he sings a Gikuyu saying, "[t]wo hands can carry a beehive, / One man's ability is not enough, / One finger cannot kill a louse, / Many hands make work light" (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 114-115). This call to collective action is more than just a throwback to the past; it is a real, moving plan for the present and future. By invoking the spirit of "harambee," Gicaamba not only emphasises the importance of solidarity among peasants and workers, but also mythologises and nationalises their collective struggle (Chakraborty 774). In doing so, he converts the notion of "harambee" into a revolutionary force that motivates the characters—and, by extension, the Kenyan people—to the third stage, where they must fight together against neo-colonial forces to recapture their land, rights, and dignity.

The play also emphasises how "harambee" is critical in opposing neo-colonial practices that seek to further divide and control the Kenyan people. Gicaamba's assertion that "[w]e cannot end poverty by erecting a hundred churches in the village; / We cannot end poverty by erecting a hundred beer-halls in the village" (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 114) is a criticism of those in power and their superficial solutions which only serve to divert attention away from the real issues at hand. Instead, he promotes "organisation," which is continually emphasised as essential to their struggle: "Organization is our sword / Organization is our gun / Organization is our shield" (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 116). This

emphasis on organisation is a call to arms, encouraging Kenyans to embrace the "harambee" mentality as a means of emancipation.

Furthermore, the play's performance became an embodiment of "harambee." When *I Will Marry* premiered, it was more than just a theatrical event; it was a collective festival in which audience members from all walks of life interacted with the play in a highly personal manner: They associated with the characters, adopted their language, and integrated the play's ideas into their daily lives (Ukpokodu 33). This community experience exemplifies the essence of "harambee," as the play provided an occasion for individuals to reflect on their shared challenges and imagine a common route forward. In this regard, *I Will Marry* employs the Kenyan national culture component "harambee" not just as a thematic element, but also as a practical weapon for encouraging revolutionary action in both its characters and the audience at large. By evoking the spirit of "harambee," the play emphasises the importance of unity and collective struggle in the fight against neo-colonial exploitation, ultimately serving as a catalyst for the realisation of Fanon's third stage, revolution, in which people band together to reclaim their nation and forge a new, independent future.

As stated, in the play, land is more than a mere geographical spot; it is a powerful symbol of belonging, liberty, and struggle. Kiguunda's title-deed represents notably more than just ownership of one and a half acres; it contains his dignity, connection to his ancestors, and role in the larger struggle for independence and self-determination (Gikandi 189; Tshering and Chitra 146). This small plot of land, despite its size, is a potent symbol of his autonomy, representing his victory over colonial dispossession and his claim to a future free of persecution. However, the precariousness of this ownership highlights the fragility of the gains earned in the war for independence, reflecting the ongoing struggle against neo-colonial forces that threaten to undo the hard-won victories of the past.

Kiguunda's strong commitment to his land is shown when he says, "These one and a half acres? These are worth more to me / Than all the thousands that belong to Ahab Kioi wa Kanoru" (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 3-4). His regard for the title-deed, which he examines as if it were "a title for a thousand acres," demonstrates the document's symbolic value in a postcolonial society where land ownership is both a symbol of

honour and a marker of one's status in the world. However, the play also highlights the shaky nature of this ownership. Kiguunda's assessment on the years after independence, in which he regrets that he is "just a labourer / On farms owned by Ahab Kioi wa Kanoru," reflects the harsh truth that the promises of freedom have not been fulfilled for many like him (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 28). His title deed, once a sign of empowerment, is now a glaring reminder of the betrayal of independent principles. The land, which was intended to be a source of life and autonomy, is now a site of continuous exploitation and poverty, demonstrating the regressive nature of abandoning the revolutionary struggle in favour of absorption into a neo-colonial system.

This regression is a prominent element in the play, with the loss of land representing a return to alienation and assimilation. When Kiguunda loses his land, he loses not just physical space but also his identity and autonomy, effectively reverting to the assimilationist phase of native consciousness. As a result, the land becomes a struggle for preserving self-determination and resisting neo-colonial influences. According to Ogude, land in Ngugi's writings is "a metaphor for struggle and the physical space for political contestation," making it the most potent representation of both the achievements and challenges of the postwar era (90).

The call in *I Will Marry* to "drive away the darkness / From all our land" (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 114) is a strong metaphor for recovering the land from the remains of colonial oppression and the presence of neo-colonial oppression. This call for collective action not only expresses the protagonists' yearning to regain their stolen land, but also the larger struggle for decolonisation and equality. The "darkness" reflects the continuing impacts of neo-colonialism, which still cast a shadow over the country and its rightful owners. The play shows that the land, which was expropriated by white settlers during the colonial period and by black elites during the neo-colonial period, must be returned to its legitimate Kenyan owners in order to fully release the people from the bonds of both material and mental colonisation (Koster et al. 84). This reclamation of land is more than just an economic need; it is also a significant act of cultural and spiritual rehabilitation and critical to the community's healing and reestablishment of its identity. The play, thus, places the land at the centre of the struggle for independence and cultural re-formation, where driving away the "darkness" equates with overthrowing the

neo-colonial masters and restoring the land to those who have been displaced. In doing so, the play reinforces the vital significance of the third stage of Fanon, in which the people fully regain their autonomy and identity free of neo-colonial constraints.

It must be noted that the play's language serves as a key tool for revolutionary consciousness, too, with roots in Kenya's cultural and political context. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's decision to write the play in Gikuyu, rather than English, is a powerful act of resistance against colonial and neo-colonial powers. Ngũgĩ's use of the local language reclaims the Gikuyu people's linguistic history while simultaneously elevating the voices of the working class and peasantry and making them the key subjects and primary readers of his work (Gikandi 37). This linguistic choice is more than just communication; it is a declaration of national culture and autonomy, encapsulating the essence of Frantz Fanon's third-stage natives, who actively contribute to the formation of a national culture. According to Desai,

> *Ngaahika Ndeenda* reflects the everyday concerns of peasants and workers of Kamiriithu. It is presented from the villagers' point of view, using their local idiom and language and drawing upon their songs, dances, and mime traditions. As a theatrical product, *Ngaahika Ndeenda* articulates a national culture rooted in the traditions and struggles of the Gikuyu peasantry and working class. An examination of the processual constitution of this articulation, controlled by the majority, reveals the richness of the theatrical enterprise as a tool for adult education, consciousness raising, and social change. (83)

The quote emphasises the importance of *I Will Marry* as a cultural artefact that surpasses the limitations of colonial narratives by articulating a national culture that is truly founded in the Kenyan people's lived experiences. As Desai observes, the play portrays the everyday problems of the Gikuyu peasantry and working class through their own terminology, music, dancing, and traditions, emphasising the play's significance in reclaiming and reconstructing a national identity free of colonial influences. This emphasis on a Kenyan-centered narrative demonstrates how *I Will Marry* serves as a powerful medium for both education and social change, cultivating a collective consciousness that is deeply connected to indigenous traditions and struggles rather than being influenced by external colonial frameworks. The play's capacity to communicate an authentically Kenyan national culture controlled by the majority challenges the supremacy of colonial cultural impositions and emphasises the significance of rooting national culture in the people's true heritage and voices.

In the Dedication, the play's tribute to all individuals who have pioneered the development of Gikuyu literature, including Mau Mau composers and up-to-date artists, emphasises the importance of language in the larger anti-imperialist battle. Ngũgĩ recognises the achievements of individuals such as Gakaara wa Wanja, who, despite being detained by the British for his patriotic writings, continued to compose and publish in Gikuyu. This Dedication emphasises the importance of language in conserving and developing patriotic literature as a tool for resistance and empowerment. Thus, language, as a critical component of Kenyan national culture, is directly realised in *Ngaahika Ndeenda* and powerfully conveyed by the play's revolutionary features.

In *I Will Marry*, orature, too, serves as a significant weapon for reflecting and shaping revolutionary awareness, while also being used by first-stage natives to perpetuate colonial ideas. The play's use of orature, which includes songs, dances, and prayers, is an important part of its narrative, graphically depicting the complicated nature of cultural expression following Kenya's war for independence. Orature in the play, particularly through the third-stage native, acts as a stimulant for revolutionary zeal and mobilisation. Songs and dances performed by characters like as Kiguunda, Wangeci, Njooki, and Gicaamba are not only creative expressions, but also essential tools for communicating their complaints and aspirations. The use of freedom songs, as seen in the scenes displaying the procession singing for liberty, represents the people's desire for political and social reform (Mĩriĩ and Thiong'o 41-42). These musical aspects are not limited to the theatrical frame, but also stretch into the larger sociopolitical backdrop, encouraging the audience to participate in the continuous struggle for independence and justice (Desai 84). The play is successfully transformed into a vehicle for revolutionary education and consciousness through this participatory use of literature, which is consistent with Fanon's thesis of the revolutionary native.

Conversely, orature is used by first-stage locals in the play to promote colonial values such as Christianity. The scenes with Kioi, Jezebel, and Ndugire singing hymns highlight how colonial ideology were perpetuated through cultural expressions. The play criticises how orature can be co-opted to maintain the status quo by highlighting the use of Christian hymns as a tool for upholding colonial beliefs and subordinating local traditions. The celebratory anthems and Christian fervour exhibited in these

settings highlight the dichotomy between orature's revolutionary potential and its exploitation for assimilationist goals. Finally, *I Will Marry* demonstrates the dual role of orature in colonial resistance. While it is an important tool for expressing revolutionary sentiments and raising national consciousness among peasants, it also highlights the possibility for colonial forces to usurp cultural forms in order to maintain their rule. The play's dynamic portrayal of orature not only confirms its importance in developing Kenyan national culture, but also criticises the ongoing fight between revolutionary and assimilationist forces. This duality strengthens the play's exploration of larger topics such as resistance, cultural transformation, and national culture.

The final part of Kenyan national culture, theatre, is abundantly apparent in the performance itself. Thus, theatre through *I Will Marry* symbolises more than just a form of artistic expression; it appears as an essential component of national culture, persisting and reasserting itself even in the face of oppression. The play, which is strongly based in the Kenyan people's struggles and aspirations, employs theatre to promote revolutionary consciousness, social solidarity, and cultural continuity. The play exceeds the confines of the theatrical frame by ending with a call to action rather than a resolution, inspiring and mobilising collective opposition throughout Kenyan culture (Desai 84). Theatre, as expressed through *I Will Marry*, is a participatory style of cultural engagement that allows Kenyan communities to replay their past expressions of dissent and resistance. The combination of song, dance, and performance in the play depicts the history of anti-colonial resistance. The play is used as a democratic public place where peasants and workers can express their concerns, aspirations, and national culture (Nicholls 155-156). This participatory nature of theatre emphasises its importance as a vital component of national culture—one that cannot be abolished, prohibited, or suppressed, it is constantly resurfacing in new forms.

Even when Kenyan authorities prohibited *I Will Marry*, the durability of theatre as a cultural expression was demonstrated. Thiong'o's portrayal of how peasants and labourers travelled kilometres to see the play, which reflected their own lives and history, emphasises the close relationship between theatre and the Kenyan people. The ban and subsequent detention of playwrights underlined theatre's power as a tool for social and political transformation. As Tshering and Chitra argue, "Thiong'o used

theatre to criticize, and convert his writing of art to utilitarian value. In this process, the theatre became an instrument or ideological weapon for a social-political change in post-colonial societies" (145). The above statement highlights theatre's transformative impact in postcolonial contexts, when it serves not just as a form of artistic expression but also as a means of reclaiming and protecting national culture. In this light, theatre is of crucial importance to the Kenyan people. Its ability to withstand and re-establish itself in the face of oppression demonstrates its critical significance in the formation and maintenance of national culture. Despite the prohibition, *I Will Marry*'s continuous performance and influence demonstrate that theatre is an integral part of Kenyan culture. It exemplifies a national culture that, even when challenged, remains essential to the country's survival and self-expression. Through theatre, Kenyans not only oppose colonial and neo-colonial oppression, but also express their cultural identity, ensuring that their experiences, struggles, and aspirations are never forgotten. Thus, theatre plays an important role in achieving Frantz Fanon's third stage.

In conclusion, *I Will Marry* expertly navigates Frantz Fanon's three stages of national culture formation in Kenya's neo-colonial environment. The play depicts how characters embody and progress through these stages, providing a profound commentary on the intricacies of postcolonial identity and resistance. Characters like Kioi, Jezebel, Ikuua, Helen, and Ndugire represent the first step, assimilation. Their acts demonstrate a strong agreement with colonial beliefs and practices, highlighting their desire to integrate into the colonial framework for personal advantage or social advancement. This integration stage demonstrates the colonial power institutions' widespread influence on individual and communal behaviour. Wangeci and Kiguunda provide a lively and diverse journey through Fanon's stages. Initially, both characters support revolutionary ideals, vigorously opposing colonial oppression and advocating for cultural restoration. As the story progresses, their experiences bring them to a point of assimilation, in which they try to reconcile their revolutionary zeal with the prevailing neo-colonial realities. This phase of assimilation is distinguished by a transitory alignment with colonial practices, motivated by pragmatic concerns and socioeconomic pressures. Wangeci and Kiguunda eventually enter the rejection phase, affirming their cultural heritage while rejecting the superficial benefits of assimilation. Their path demonstrates the fluidity and complexities of navigating national identity in

a neo-colonial society. On the other hand, Njooki and Gicaamba consistently represent the third stage, revolution. Their continuous dedication to revolutionary ideas and role in raising national consciousness demonstrate their significant involvement in the struggle for a truly freed Kenyan identity. Their unwavering revolutionary posture contrasts with the more unpredictable paths of the other characters, illustrating the play's emphasis on the need of persistent resistance and the ongoing struggle for cultural and political sovereignty. The play poignantly depicts the fragility of essential national culture aspects like land and language, which are still contested and vulnerable in the face of ongoing neo-colonial influences. However, unlike *The Trial*, *I Will Marry* captures all the components of Kenyan national culture, namely Mau Mau, Dedan Kimathi, Harambee, Land, Languages, Orature, and Theatre. Finally, the play provides a critical study of Kenya's post-independence struggle, highlighting the intricacies of transitioning through assimilation, rejection, and revolution. By presenting the many experiences of its protagonists, *I Will Marry* offers a poignant remark on the resilience and struggles inherent in the desire for a truly independent Kenya and national culture.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this thesis indicates that Ngũgĩ's two plays, *The Trial and I Will Marry* portray the development of Kenyan national culture, through stages identifed by Fanon. Despite the fact that *The Trial* is set in the colonial period, it effectively embraces characteristics of Kenyan national culture. Despite being created in the post-independence period, the play's use of colonial-era methods, as well as its performance in a colonial environment, prevent it from providing a totally independent portrayal of national culture. In contrast, *I Will Marry* is the result of the Ngũgĩ's significant transformation, which included changing his name and abandoning English in favour of writing in Gikuyu. The play, which is free of colonial instruments and made in partnership with the rural Kenyan people, perfectly captures aspects of Kenyan national culture. It reflects the Kenyan people's unity and cultural essence, free of colonial restraints. Thus, while both plays address Kenyan national culture, they do so from distinct angles, with the second play offering a more accurate depiction of postcolonial national culture.

As argued in Chapter I, *The Trial*, exemplifies the difficulties of attaining a fully freed national culture inside a colonial framework by using colonial techniques to depict national culture. The play effectively shows Frantz Fanon's three stages of national culture development—assimilation, rejection, and revolution—but its colonial background has a considerable impact on its portrayal of an emancipated identity. Characters representing the assimilation phase include the Second Soldier, Gatotia, Business Executive, Politician, and Priest. These characters acquire and reflect colonial standards, demonstrating colonial power's enduring influence on social and individual identities. The First Soldier exemplifies the rejection phase by breaking away from colonial values and returning to indigenous cultural roots. This character's journey from assimilation to recovering native identity emphasises the effort to revitalise old cultural traditions in the face of colonial authority. Characters such as Dedan Kimathi, Boy, Girl, and Woman help to illustrate the revolutionary phase. Dedan Kimathi, in particular, represents the struggle for independence and the strengthening of national awareness. His dedication to the Mau Mau uprising and leadership shows the need of national unity and self-determination. *The Trial* is delivered in English, set in the period

of colonialism, and staged at the British-controlled Kenyan National Theatre, demonstrating colonial authorities' ongoing influence. Although the play incorporates elements of Kenyan national culture, such as dedication to the Mau Mau struggle, orature, and the concept of harambee, the colonial context restricts its potential to completely realise an emancipated national culture. Finally, while *The Trial* gives a complex depiction of Fanon's stages of national culture formation, its colonial setting has an impact on its image of an emancipated Kenyan culture. The play's reliance on colonial methods shows the difficulty of creating a distinct national culture inside a framework still moulded by colonial influences.

As Chapter II argues, *I Will Marry* explores how national culture is formed within a microcosm that mimics colonial contexts, illustrating a master/servant dynamic that has been modified for neo-colonialism rather than conventional colonialism. Within Kenya's changing neo-colonial context, the play offers an incisive examination of Frantz Fanon's three stages of national culture formation: assimilation, rejection, and revolution. It provides a sophisticated reflection on postcolonial identity and resistance by illuminating how characters go through various phases before they fully embrace their national culture. Assimilation stage characters include Kioi, Jezebel, Ikuua, Helen, and Ndugire. Their attempts to assimilate into the colonial framework for social or personal progress are highlighted by their alignment with colonial ideology and practices. This stage emphasises the pervasiveness of colonial institutions and the long-lasting impact of colonial power structures on both individual and collective behaviour. Fanon's stages are experienced by Wangeci and Kiguunda in an unorganised way. After adopting revolutionary principles and resisting colonial dictatorship, individuals eventually face the realities of neo-colonialism, which triggers an assimilation phase. This phase is a result of a short-term, pragmatic adaptation to colonial practices. After a while, Wangeci and Kiguunda go back to the rejection stage, reiterating their cultural identity and rejecting assimilation's meagre advantages. Their trip demonstrates how national identity can change in response to neo-colonial difficulties. Njooki and Gicaamba are shown as the full representatives of the revolutionary natives in *I Will Marry*. Their firm commitment to revolutionary principles and their active involvement in raising public awareness are essential components of the play.

I Will Marry is a thorough portrayal of Kenyan national culture, capturing all essential components that shape the country's independent spirit. The play strongly engages with and maintains various cultural components by incorporating them into its plot, including Land, Language, Harambee, Dedan Kimathi, Mau Mau, Orature, and Theatre. Kenya's national culture is better understood and appreciated as a result of this interaction, especially in light of the country's continuous fight against neo-colonialism.

In conclusion, it has been observed that Ngũgĩ represents the third-stage native intellectual described by Frantz Fanon, as evidenced by his decision to change his name from James Ngugi to his current one and his decision to cease publishing in English in favour of Gikuyu. Fanon refers to this stage as the "fighting phase," since it is when the role of the native intellectual changes from one of passively reflecting the experiences of the people to one of actively awakening and mobilising them. Ngũgĩ's writings and the hardships he went through—such as being imprisoned without being charged and then banished—showcase his status as a genuine revolutionary intellectual. As noted by Fanon, the intellectual at this stage takes on the role of a national voice by producing literature that addresses the concerns and hopes of the populace. Through his life and work, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o serves as a potent symbol of this revolutionary period, awakening his people's consciousness and serving as the spokesperson for a brand-new, revolutionary reality. His experience is proof of the significant influence a native intellectual has on forming the character of a nation and opposing oppression by the colonial and neo-colonial regimes.

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"Tutanyakua/Mashamba yetu/Tupiganie/Uhuru wetu/Natukomboe/Elimu yetu/Tutanyakua Viwanda vyetu/Utamaduni/Ni mashamba yetu/Damu na jasho/Zatiririka/Tutakomboa/Udongo wetu!". *Glosbe*, Accessed 10 July 2024, https://glosbe.com/.

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Tarih: 27/09/2024

Tez Başlığı: *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* ve *I Will Marry When I Want* Adlı Oyunlarda Kenya Milli Kültürünün Oluşumunun Fanoncu Okuması
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