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Law, justice, and the two years that made Ngugi wa Thiong'o a Kikuyu man of the people.

Jane Plastow

Ngugi wa Thiong'o and the Kenyan liberation struggle

This paper will focus on two plays and a novel from the middle of Ngugi's career. 1976 and 1977 were the two most productive years of the writer's life, in which he wrote the novel *Petals of Blood* and co-wrote two plays, *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* and *Ngaheeka Ndeenda* (I Will Marry When I Want)[1]. The productivity came to an abrupt halt when the staging of *Ngaaheka Ndeenda* by a community peasant company led to Ngugi's detention without trial for a year in Kamiti Maximum Prison. I will be arguing here that these three outputs and the events surrounding them, which put questions of law at their centre, were pivotal to Ngugi's life and work, and key to transforming him from a realist writer heavily influenced by Western Marxist thought into a radical, African socialist, deeply involved in the semiotic codes of his Gikuyu people, operating as a Gramscian organic intellectual.

To put the work in context: Ngugi wa Thiong'o was born in 1938 into a polygamous peasant family. Much of the wealth of his extended family had been lost as a result of British colonial policy which expropriated vast tracts of good agricultural land in the early twentieth century in what became known as the 'White Highlands', forcing Kenyans onto marginal lands or to work as landless labourers where they had previously been the owners[2]. From 1952 as Ngugi's mother struggled to find the money to keep him in primary school the Mau Mau guerrilla liberation struggle was the background to his life, with members of his family fighting on both sides[3]. Ngugi became a fierce anti-colonial patriot, but one largely distanced from the struggle as, during the suppression of Mau Mau, after the capture of Dedan Kimathi in 1956, he was away from home after winning a boarding scholarship to Kenya's elite Alliance High School, while by the time Kenya finally achieved independence in 1963 Ngugi was studying at Makerere University in Uganda.

Ngugi began his creative career whilst at Makerere with his nationalist play,*The Black Hermit* (1962), and a number of short stories, but rose to international fame with the novels *Weep Not, Child* (1964), *The River Between* (1965), and especially following the critical success of *A Grain of Wheat* (1967). The early realist writings are concerned with tribalism versus nationalism and tensions between traditionalists and those who have taken on the religion or values of colonialism, but they are certainly not socialist. Marxism came to Ngugi whilst he was studying at Leeds University from 1964 to 1966 with a group of radical students and lecturers. Commentators such as Simon Gikandi[4], backed up by evidence from Ngugi's own account in *Barrel of a Pen* [5], see *A Grain of Wheat* as hugely influenced by Frantz Fanon and the radical politics of his *The Wretched of the Earth*[6]. However, *A Grain of Wheat*, which has as its central character a man who betrayed the Mau Mau liberation struggle, is deeply ambivalent about those who fought in the forests. Why then are *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* and all subsequent writing so different in their portrayal of Mau Mau as a fundamentally heroic enterprise; and why do they call for popular revolutionary overthrow of colonial law and the capitalist state?

How to make an organic intellectual. (Part 1) Listening to the people.

The Ngugi wa Thiong'o who returned to Kenya in 1966 had been politicised by his contact with Marxist academics and his disillusion with the neo-colonial government of Jomo Kenyatta, which allowed 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. He was also a realist writer sometimes seen, and applauded by the western literary establishment, as much influenced by the conservative Leavisite 'great tradition'. He was an academic intellectual who wrote beautiful, complex, measured literature; albeit from an increasingly left wing perspective. The production of *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* was to change all that.

Firstly, the play is co-written, and with a woman, thus undercutting the idea of the 'sacred' text drawn from the inspiration of a unique elite individual. Secondly it was a work that required the playwrights to seek out the peasants amongst whom Mau Mau leader Field Marshal Dedan Kimathi had grown up in order to try to understand their man. This, it seems to me, was key. The playwrights discuss in their Preface how they visited Kimathi's village and met people who had known him:

> They talked of his warm personality and his love of people. He was clearly their beloved son, their respected leader and they talked of him as still being alive.[…] We went back to Nairobi.[…]We would try and recreate the same great man of courage, of commitment to the people, as had been so graphically described to us. (Preface. *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*)

What was radical in this was that Ngugi and Mugo were challenging the authorised written record which both under colonialism *and* post-independence inscribed Mau Mau as a movement which 'was a savage and brutal form of extreme nationalism'[7]. Kenyatta's regime had no interest in valourising popular struggle; rather it was busy propping up neo-colonial elitist entitlement, but what was particularly concerning to writers such as Ngugi and his collaborator, Micere Mugo, was that the state was apparently encouraging Kenyans to accept colonialist views of Mau Mau.

In *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* Ngugi and Mugo are beginning to 'read' their culture through popular codes as opposed to according with the conventions elite literary knowledge. They are beginning to write through indigenous prisms of understanding that challenge authorised Western rationalist modes of literary production. In his autobiography and his accounts of discussions with ordinary people Ngugi makes repeated reference to popular talk of Kimathi's apparently miraculous powers[8]. His play seeks to incorporate and interpret such popular mythology. In the First Movement the character of young Boy eagerly tells of Kimathi's super-human feats, before Woman, who represents a true revolutionary, interprets the stories' symbolic truth:

BOY: They say he used to talk with God.
WOMAN: Yes. The fighting god in us…the oppressed ones.
BOY: They say…they say that he could crawl on his belly for ten miles or more.
WOMAN: He had to be strong – for us – because of us Kenyan people.
BOY: They say…they say that he could change himself into a bird, an aeroplane, wind, anything?
WOMAN: Faith in a cause can work miracles.
[…]

BOY: Maybe they only captured his shadow, his outer form…don't you think?...and let his spirit abroad, in arms.
WOMAN: Your words contain wisdom, son. Kimathi was never alone…will never be alone. No bullet can kill him as long as women continue to bear children. pp20-21

There is a mutual learning going on in this exchange, demonstrated in the dots and dashes representing pause for thought. The boy wants at first desperately to believe in the literal truth of what he has heard. His repeated, 'They say…they say', both begs for corroboration from woman and expresses his doubt about the truth of what he has heard, while Woman answers slowly and thoughtfully as she seeks to make clear her interpretation of the underlying 'truth' behind these stories. And gradually Boy learns, so that by the time he can differentiate between shadow and spirit he is beginning to see that Kimathi is both a man *and* an idea, and while the man may be caught his spirit of revolution can live on in the Kenyan people. It is as though the playwrights are also feeling their way forward, trying to understand a new kind of vernacular, one which tells its truth through an indigenous semiotic code. They are reclaiming both their birthright of popular Kenyan knowledge and an heroic Mau Mau heritage.

They are also beginning to reclaim language. Post-1977 Ngugi became famous for advocating publishing in indigenous languages as a means of validating and empowering the people of Africa as the primary audience an African writer should seek[9]. *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* is the first time he experiments substantially with incorporating local languages into his text, thus making his work accessible to ordinary Kenyans.

Colonial law and Revolutionary law

The subject matter of *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* is apparently obvious in the play's title. And indeed the moment the playwrights keep returning us to is the reading of the charge at the centre of Kimathi's trial.

> JUDGE: Dedan Kimathi, you are charged that on the night of Sunday, October the 21st, 1956, at or near Ihururu in Nyeri District, you were found in possession of a firearm, namely a revolver, without a licence, contrary to section 89 of the penal code, which under Special Emergency Regulations constitutes a criminal offence. Guilty or not guilty?

Five times this charge is given throughout the play, but crucially no plea is ever entered. This is the 'real' charge made against Kimathi, somewhat absurdly the only 'proof' that could be pinned on a man everyone knew had been leading a guerrilla war in the Kenyan forests for the previous five years. What the playwrights do with this charge is to repeatedly challenge its validity by showing the context of thieving, torturing British colonialism, until it is not Kimathi but colonial justice which is tried in the court of the theatre.

The first readings are followed by silence and a 'sudden darkness' (p3) out of which emerges the story, told through mime, dance and song, of the oppression of Africans by white men from the earliest days of the slave trade through to the 1950s. We then go into the main narrative of how sympathisers are planning to smuggle a gun into gaol so Kimathi can free himself. A third reading

takes Kimathi into a debate with a judge who first tries to argue that justice is neutral and universal before contradicting himself.

JUDGE: I am not talking about the laws of Nyandarua jungle
KIMATHI: The jungle of colonialism? Of exploitation? For it is there that you'll find creatures of prey feeding on the blood and bodies of those who toil. (p 26)

Unable to move their prisoner in open court the regime resorts to a series of 'trials' reminiscent in language and form of the temptations of Christ; during which they seek first to bribe Kimathi with promises of power and wealth, and when that fails to break him through torture. None of it works, and the moral and legal standing of the court is utterly exploded. Following a final reading of the charge, and in line with a challenge from their peasant informers to prove that Kimathi was ever killed[10], Mugo and Ngugi utterly subvert colonial realist truth to show an uprising of the Kenyan people as they free their hero and take into their own hands the completion of a liberation process aborted by the execution of Kimathi and the sellout – as the playwrights see it – of the postcolonial regime.

Colonial law is revealed as corrupt, and Ngugi and Mugo contrast it with a demonstration of the law of Nyandarua forest. (It is of course deeply ironic that the judge refers to the forest as a 'jungle', a popular site in the colonial imagination of African 'savagery', when we are about to witness both real justice and mercy in a location the colonialist cannot even correctly name[11].) Revolutionary justice is explored in some detail in the Third Movement of the play. In a flashback scene the fighters have captured two British soldiers and a Kenyan member of the King's African Rifles[12], and Kimathi arrives to try them. He starts with the British prisoners, but the questions he asks are not about what they have done in Kenya; rather he wants to know if they are from wealthy or worker families, and when they say they are of the poor he goes on: 'Are you fighting for the working people of your country?' (64) The soldiers do not answer and a stage direction says: 'They look at one another, confused, as if they don't know what he is talking about.'

The playwrights are making it clear that these men are oppressed, just as Kenyans are oppressed, by the imperialist class system. Kimathi gives them one chance when he asks: 'Will you denounce British imperialism?' (64) The soldiers do not understand this socialist perspective, but when they reject their single opportunity for class solidarity they are led away for execution. The Kenyan soldier gets no chance. He is immediately denounced as a mercenary. Neither poverty nor ignorance can be allowed as an excuse for betraying one's fellow oppressed. The playwrights are making it explicit in this scene that they are viewing the struggle not through nationalist, but through international socialist eyes.

However the scene is not complete. Kimathi goes into a long speech about the need for vigilance and internal self-discipline to combat the propaganda and power of the enemy before four Mau Mau fighters are brought in for judgement, accused of seeking to negotiate with the enemy. Most importantly one of the accused is Kimathi's own brother, Wambararia. It is in the historical record that this encounter really did happen, and as in history Kimathi extends mercy to these men who then betray him and escape to the British. The message is clear. Family ties cannot be allowed to get in the way of revolutionary justice. To fight such a powerful enemy as capitalist imperialism

revolutionaries need to understand that workers and peasants must stand together, but they also need enormous self-discipline and a justice system which cannot afford sentimental weakness in the face of the overwhelming odds it is seeking to combat.

If a debate on law is central to *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* it is also important in the novel which Ngugi published next. *Petals of Blood* is also about dispossessed Kenyan people, but this time it is firmly set in the post-colonial period. After a period of terrible drought the ignored people of the isolated village of Ilmorog march to Nairobi to seek the help of their Member of Parliament. He along with pillars of the neo-colonial state the villagers encounter on their journey; religious, educational and business leaders, all abuse and refuse assistance to the poor and powerless. The only member of the elite willing to help is a lawyer. This man is clear eyed in his vision of the corruption of the state, and aware that even his legal practice run for the benefit of the poor is still part of an oppressive system.

> I am a lawyer […] what does this mean? I also earn my living by ministering to the monster. I am an expert in those laws meant to protect the sanctity of the monster-god and his angels and the whole hierarchy of the priesthood. Only I have chosen to defend those who have broken the laws. (p 196)

The unnamed lawyer[13] gives the Ilmorogians shelter and valuable advice and assists in the long term by lending books from his personal library to the young rebel, Karega. Later in the book he becomes an MP. He tries as much as any man could to reform the situation from inside the establishment; using the establishment tools of law and learning. But for the new Ngugi who rests his faith in the actions and knowledge of a united people, this intellectual, individual approach can only ever be palliative. The lawyer/MP is assassinated, and hope resides at the end of the novel in the beginnings of a trade union revolt inspired by looking back to revolutionary Mau Mau. Law for Ngugi is not a neutral force but only as good as the ideology of the men and women who make it.

How to make an organic intellectual. (Part 2) Acting with the people.

Literary criticism on Ngugi's novels is extensive and mostly written in English. Relatively few Kenyan people had access to or were able to read his novels written in English so the Kenyan government had little problem with novelist Ngugi even when he attacked the state. It was only when he started putting on plays – which have attracted minimal critical discussion - that valourised popular heroes or critiqued government, and most especially when he wrote them in local languages using local performance forms, that he was first detained without trial and subsequently forced into long term exile.

The Trial of Dedan Kimathi was staged by university students and was selected to be one of two Kenyan plays to be sent to represent the country at the prestigious FESTAC gathering of African theatre in Nigeria in 1977. Before the plays went abroad the playwrights wanted to put them on in Kenya and the obvious place seemed to be the National Theatre. In a lecture entitled 'Enactments of Power: The Politics of Performance Space', Ngugi explained at some length how the white clique, backed by Kenyatta's government, which still ran the theatre over a decade after Kenyan independence, only allowed the two Kenyan plays four days each to perform, and that only after

enormous pressure to interrupt their normally exclusively European fare[14]. He also discusses the huge impact of the play, where every night after it finished the audience joined in with the final triumphant call for liberation and carried their celebrations outside in a mass outpouring and revival of revolutionary and Mau Mau inspired music and song.

They might have been unprepared for the level of impact of the play, but Ngugi and Mugo use their drama to not only talk about but embody the injustice of the colonial system. The stage directions are very particular about the layout of the courtroom.. Most especially stress is put on the need to segregate the races witnessing the trial. 'Africans' we are told 'squeeze around one side, seated on rough benches. Whites occupy more comfortable seats on the opposite side' (p3). The arrangement of the stage embodies the injustice of the white stealing of space which gave rise to the Mau Mau struggle waged by the tellingly named Kenya Land and Freedom Army.

Ngugi is himself enormously aware of the importance of embodying issues of space and power in his theatre. In 'Enactments of Power' he makes a number of references to Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage, 1979) and the state's desire to act out its power and the rituals of punishment. Ngugi and Mugo set up an enactment of state power in creating a courtroom and repeatedly reading out the charge against Kimathi, but in their case this is done in order to make transparent to their audience state tactics for controlling the people and, every time the charge is read out, the courtroom space is subverted as we are transported to the stories which make clear the illegitimacyof this government, its law and its right to try Dedan Kimathi.

The Trial of Dedan Kimathi is an African socialist play in that it eschews western emphasis on the psychology of the exceptional individual in favour of looking at representative types. Kimathi is only sporadically a particular individual, he is also the embodiment of an idea, as are characters such as Boy, Girl and Woman. White power is embodied in the figure of Shaw Henderson. Like Dedan Kimathi, Henderson was a real man who, equal and opposite to Kimathi, represents all the evils of the colonial regime and its laws. He believes in the racial superiority of white people, is a dedicated hunter of Mau Mau fighters and a torturer[15]. Henderson *is* British law in this play, taking on the roles of policeman, prosecutor and judge. We see the British colonial and legal systems as monolithic and implacable but also as fundamentally illegitimate and brutal in their reliance on violent coercion.

Building on the learning of *Petals of Blood* and even more so on *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, Ngugi was to further transform his understanding of the role of law, performance and the intellectual in the making of the play *Ngaahika Ndeenda* (I Will Marry When I Want).This was a play Ngugi wrote with Ngugi wa Mirii and the collective of the participants involved with the Kamiriithu Cultural Centre. It was not a piece he had planned. Rather members of the struggling cultural centre in his local town of Limuru had pestered him to help them with their adult education activities. This developed into Ngugi wa Thiong'o, with fellow academic Ngugi wa Mirii, helping the community to write a play about their own lives, in their own language of Gikuyu and using their song and dance forms. Ngugi produced an initial script which then underwent two months of modifications from the community actors, before going into rehearsal[16]. At the same time the community built a 2,000 seat open air theatre. Ngugi says of this time:

> The six months between June and November 1977 were the most exciting in my life and the true beginning of my education. I learnt my language anew. I rediscovered the creative nature and power of collective work. (*Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary*. p76)

The play he and his collaborators produced was set in contemporary Kenya, and told the story of how a rich Christian Kenyan family trick their poor neighbours out of all they have, a one and a half acre plot, in order to facilitate the building of a foreign owned factory, while their son is busy impregnating and then abandoning the poor couple's only daughter. Proper socialist thinking is provided by the couple's factory working neighbours, before the community of the poor unite at the end of the play to vow unity in the mission to reorientate the nation and dedicate themselves to a revolution of the dispossessed. *Ngaheeka Ndeenda* is a piece of impeccable – and often extendedly polemical - Marxist dialectic, but in performance is carried by sequences of song and dance and by the tenderness of the relationship between the protagonist couple, Kiguunda and Wangeci.

Once more we see the law as a tool of the rich. At the beginning of the play his title deed to the land he lives on is Kiguunda's most prized possession, hanging in pride of place on the living room wall. By the end of the play he has been tricked, as were Ngugi's forebears, out of his land. But this time it is not white colonialists but Kenyan capitalists who are impoverishing their compatriots. In three consecutive pieces Ngugi has explored the workings of the law and concluded that both during and post-colonialism it is no protection for the poor. Law is not impartial but is always manipulated by the ruling class and must to be recast to serve the needs of the working people.

This, the first Gikuyu play, was a triumphant popular success. A community was empowered and Ngugi along with it. Nine weekend fee-paying public performances were packed out with busloads coming from all over Gikuyu areas of Kenya. Other community groups approached Kamiriithu wanting advice on how to set up their own centres, and new plays were being written by community members. Ngugi is quite clear as to the factors which created what he calls 'an epistemological break with my past'[17], and made the play resonate so powerfully among ordinary, non-academic Kenyans. Language is first and foremost. 'The question of audience settled the problem of language choice; and the language choice settled the question of audience.'[18] It was however not just the audience but also the community who made the play that determined its' language. In *Decolonising the Mind* Ngugi explains how *Ngaahika Ndeenda* was created by the Kamiriithu community over many months as they witnessed, took part in, and critiqued the rehearsal process which perforce took place in clear view of the community whose lives it represented. The play became a mutual learning process, both culturally in terms of use of indigenous language and form, and politically in terms of developing understanding of the people's history and struggle against capitalist imperialism and neo-colonialism. It became, in fact, an exemplar of Frierean mutual learning through praxis, with the intellectual working with and serving his community rather than taking on the arrogant, ignorant leadership role Ngugi had critiqued right back when he wrote his first play, *The Black Hermit*, in 1962.

In performance language is not, however, just a matter of words. *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* had demonstrated to Ngugi the power of popular music and song, in *Ngaahika Ndeenda* much of the weight of the play is carried by extended music, dance and song sequences. He calls the play a piece

of musical theatre, utilising Kenyan performance forms, rather than relying on an imported European idea of theatre as privileging dialogue. Ngugi explains:

> Even daily speech among peasants is interspersed with song. It can be a line or two, a verse, or a whole song. What's important is that song and dance are not just decorations; they are an integral part of that conversation, that drinking session, that ritual, that ceremony. In *Ngaahika Ndeenda* we too tried to incorporate song and dance, as part of the structure and movement of the actors […] The song and the dance become a continuation of the conversation and of the action. (*Decolonising the Mind*. p 44)

Ngugi is absolutely clear that it is the coming together of meaningful content, language and performance form which made *Ngaahika Ndeenda* cogent and powerful. It provided a blueprint for developing a contemporary Kenyan cultural form which could reach far beyond national theatre buildings and educated elites. And it carried Ngugi forward on his journey, foreshadowed in his condemnation of the self-indulgent, destructive, arrogant angst of Remi, the intellectual anti-hero of *The Black Hermit*, towards becoming that organic, native intellectual who 'must fashion revolution with the people', because then, 'the songs will come by themselves, and of themselves'(Sekou Toure, quoted in Fanon's *The Wretched of the* Earth, p166)[19]. And then the government stepped in, banned further performances and detained Ngugi.

Law, justice, terrorism and the critics

What the Kenyan government has done to Ngugi and his collaborators after banning *Ngaahika Ndeenda* has been a succession of acts of state terrorism which in themselves go a long way to endorsing the political views he espouses in all the texts I have been considering. He was held in appalling conditions, without trial, for year after the banning of his play. Released after the death of President Kenyatta in 1978, in 1982, with a cast of 200 volunteers from Kamiriithu, Ngugi developed a new musical play, *Maitu Njugira* (Mother, Sing for Me). This play never got as far as formal production. It was refused a performance license, and 'open rehearsals' at the University of Nairobi which resulted in wildly enthusiastic, overflowing audiences led to the banning of the play, exile for Ngugi and his director, the forbidding of the villagers of Kamiriithu from ever putting on another production and the razing of their open air theatre. Only in 2004, when the government of Kenyatta's equally right wing successor, Daniel arap Moi, had been overthrown and a regime which promised more liberal governance came to power, was Ngugi able to consider returning home. He went for a visit with his wife, Njeeri. And there, in an exclusive and well guarded complex in Nairobi, unknown 'gangsters' broke in, raped his wife and tortured Ngugi, putting out cigarettes on his flesh. The perpetrators have never been brought to justice and Ngugi has never again sought to return home. Kenya remains a committedly capitalist nation of startling wealth inequalities, and with little popular theatre or literature.

Ngugi himself continued to write in exile. His novels he now writes first in Gikuyu before translating them into English. Theatre is obviously impractical without a Kikuyu community base to provide actors. He has also continued to write cultural and political commentary, and has led a centre committed to promoting translation from his university home in Irvine, California. His work is greatly

admired and widely written about and taught. But the admiring, writing and teaching are generally limited to a consideration of Ngugi's novels. The only book length studies on Ngugi which give any substantial space to his theatre are Simon Gikandi's *Ngugi wa Thiong'o* and Brendon Nicholls' *Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Gender, and the Ethics of Postcolonial Reading*, most other commentators either completely ignore or elide a consideration of the theatre, often with a few dismissive words about its inferior quality. It seems to me that this is not good enough. In his writing about culture and politics Ngugi returns time and again to the seminal influence of his theatrical work in influencing how and what he would subsequently write. It was theatre that brought Ngugi to his understanding of language issues. It was theatre that transformed him from a realist to a symbolic writer embedding the imagery and poetry of his peoples' culture in his work. And it was theatre that finally demonstrated to him that radical change in Kenya can never be brought about by the efforts of even the most well-meaning intellectuals, unless they are truly working with their people. To ignore the events that energised and created the writer and his works post-1976 is surely at the very least a mistake in many contemporary literary critics. At worst one might argue that criticism which does not take into account works the writer himself sees and has repeatedly said are seminal to his art is an attempt at cultural appropriation – with mostly western scholars only choosing to approach the literature through a prism of western understandings of art. If this were true it would surely be a piece of either fairly unforgiveable postcolonial arrogance or an example of continuing postcolonial injustice.

It is true that Ngugi's theatre does not always fare well from a purely literary standpoint. It is full of long polemic speeches. Exchanges are often heavily symbolic and not naturalistically convincing, and there are all those stage directions asking for song, dance and mime. What, I suggest, we need, are some newly brave critics of both theatre and literature; ideally of course Kenyan critics who can discuss the subtleties of the texts in relation to the cultural forms and language they use, but until they come along at least critics who might expand their reading outside the English stacks, or even leave the library altogether for a while, in order to understand cultural contexts, performance forms, and the political history which alone will enable a critical voice to properly assist in the elucidation and analysis of Ngugi's creative journey without amputating or conveniently ignoring the theatre which created that key 'epistemological break' with his earlier work.

Notes

1. Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Micere Mugo, *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (London: Heinemann) 1976. Ngugi waThiong'o, *Petals of Blood*, (London: Heinemann) 1977. Ngugi waThiong'o and Ngugi wa Mirii, *Ngaahika Ndeenda(I Will Marry When I Want)* perf 1977. Published by Heinemann in Gikuyu 1980 and in English 1982.
2. For example, in the early 20th century Lord Delamere acquired estates totalling some 150,000 acres. His descendent and the heir to the estates which still come to 55,000 acres, Tom Cholmondeley, is currently on trial for shooting one Robert Njoya on the family estates. See http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/celebritynews/2224922/Lord-Delameres-heir-Tom-Cholmondeley-pens-account-of-shooting-poacher-in-Kenya.html#.
3. For an account of Ngugi's childhood see his autobiography, *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir* (London: Vintage) 2011.

4. See Simon Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 2000, Chapter 4, pp98-127.
5. Ngugi waThiong'o *Barrel of a Pen*, (London: New Beacon Books) 1983
6. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington, (New York: Grove Press) 1968.
7. S.M.Shamsul Alam, *Rethinking the Mau Mau in Colonial Kenya*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 2007, p 123.
8. See *Dreams in a Time of War*, p 195.
9. See *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, (Oxford: James Currey) 1986
10. The official record says that Kimathi was executed in prison and buried in an unmarked grave. That grave has never been publicly identified. In the Preface to their play Mugo and Ngugi describe how Kimathi's friends rejected the idea that he was dead on the grounds that no-one had seen his grave.
11. Evidence of the 'savage' manner in which the forest/jungle and Mau Mau itself were seen by European writers of the time is evidenced in the following quote. My thanks to Brendon Nicholls for this reference.'[Eric Bowyer's farm] was no more than a mile from the forest, in whose depths wild beasts, and wilder men, might lurk . . . .' C. T. Stoneham, *Mau Mau*, p. 70.
12. The Kings' African Rifles was the name given to the battalions of local soldiers – with British officers – the British raised across their East African possessions during the period of colonialism.
13. As with so many of his characters Ngugi modelled the lawyer/MP on an actual person. In this case he was J.M. Kariuki, formerly of Mau Mau.
14. Ngugi waThiong'o, *Penpoints, Gunpoints and Dreams* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), chapter 2.
15. The real Henderson is called Ian Henderson. He was a Scot who grew up in Kenya and became a notoriously brutal police officer. He wrote his recollections of the Mau Mau war with Philip Goodhart ,*The Hunt for Kimathi*. (Hamish Hamilton: London, 1958) before moving on to a thirty year career in Bahrain where he became known as The Butcher of Bahrain. He holds honours from both the British and Bahraini state for his work in Kenya and Bahrain despite British and European MPs and Amnesty International all at various times asking the authorities to hold him to account for his abuses of human rights. See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ixMDcU40Tzw
16. For an account of the establishment of Kamiriithu see Ingrid Bjorkman, *Mother, Sing for Me: People's Theatre in Kenya*, (London: Zed Books) 1989. Chapter 4.
17. Ngugi waThiong'o, *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary* (London: Heinemann)1981, p 76
18. Ngugi waThiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The politics of language in African literature*, Oxford: James Currey, 1986, p 44.
19. This quote is from the Sekou Toure, the first president of Guinea (1958-1984), a man who fought French colonialism and was much influenced by Marxist thought. It was given originally in 1959 to the second Congress of Black Writers and Artists as part of a talk entitled, 'The political leader as the representative of a culture'. The quote importantly prefaces Fanon's chapter 'On national Culture'.This is where he Fanon outlines the stages he sees a 'native intellectual' must go through to move away from colonial cultural indoctrination and become a radical servant of his people and nation. We know Fanon's thought was hugely influential in the process of Ngugi's

developing political ideology. Fanon himself does not refer to Gramsci but his thinking has notable correlations with Gramsci's ideas of the organic intellectual as developed in *The Prison Notebooks*.

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