



**DRAMA AND THE REVOLUTIONARY ARCHETYPE:
EBRAHIM HUSSEIN'S *KINJCKETILE* AND WA THIONG'O AND
MUGO'S *THE TRIAL OF DEDAN KIMATHI***

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Abstract:

In this essay, we explore the symbiotic relationship between literature and revolution, focusing on the dramatic genre. We have established that as two phenomena in a symbiotic relationship each one of them has the capacity to inspire, or arise from, the other. In terms of inspiring the other, drama seems to be the more suited genre because of its immediacy, ease of access and communal or collective engagement. Consequently, we have gone on to examine the attempts by two playwrights, to arouse the revolutionary consciousness in the people via their dramaturgy. The playwrights seem to assert that no oppressor willingly ceases to oppress the oppressed except the oppressed revolts and changes the status quo. In spite of the huge human and material cost of revolution, it is imperative because oppressors and exploiters will always make peaceful change unattainable. Both playwrights perform their responsibilities to society by awakening the consciousness of the people and alerting them to the requirements for a revolution which include: a sense of purpose, unity, determination, sacrifice and awareness.

Keywords: awareness, revolution, imperative, oppressor, oppressed, unity, determination, sacrifice

1. Introduction

Assassinated American politician and President, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, once said "*those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable*". Socio-political commentators and analysts have debated the correctness or truthfulness of this statement. Some commentators aver that contextually Kennedy was right. In making that statement, J. F. Kennedy was admitting America's guilt in supporting Batista of Cuba and inevitably leading to the rise of Fidel Castro. Never mind the irony of Kennedy's support for South Vietnam

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and America's interference in Vietnam under his watch, which effort amounted to resisting peaceful change.

On the face of it, Kennedy's assertion looks like a "petitio principii". It begs the question. Is violent revolution really the only available option in the face of repeated suppression of peaceful demonstrations and peaceful calls for change?

Going by historical and empirical evidence, the obvious answer is an unequivocal and resounding **YES**.

Again, never mind the fact that some violent resistances are accepted while some others are not. Often than not, it is a matter of politics and media hype. The American Revolution was violent. It gave birth to present day United States of America. The Russian revolution was a pair of violent revolutions (March and November, 1917) which were a response to socio-political issues of the time, including centuries of oppression of the common people by the Tsarist regimes. This revolution can be said to be the beginning of modern Russia.

The French revolution, one of the most outstanding events of the history of mankind is another example of the imperative of revolution when attempts at peaceful change fail. Beginning in 1789 and lasting till 1799, it had global ripple effects. Caused by over taxation of the people while members of the monarchy, aristocracy and clergy enjoyed life bountifully with excessive privileges, it triggered the fall of the absolute monarchy not only in France, but the world over, replacing them with liberal democracies. Even though it led to the emergence of Napoleon's dictatorship, it was inspired by the most liberal of ideas and the rights of man as a citizen in his country.

The world has seen a good number of revolutions that have changed the course of the history of places and the lives of people. In this regard, we can recall the Haitian Revolution, the Iranian Revolution, the Cuban Revolution, the Chinese Revolutions, the Young Turk Revolution, and the Spanish Civil War. Closer to us, we are reminded of the Egyptian Revolution of 2011, the Algerian Revolution of 1954-62, the Libyan Revolutions of 1969 and 2011, the Arab Spring, the ANC Revolution in South Africa, the Mau Mau Rebellion of Kenya, the Maji Maji Rebellion of Tanzania, the Aba Women's Riots of 1929 in Aba, Nigeria, etc. etc.

A revolution involves effecting change in socio-political issues and structures violently or by force because the powers that be will not allow peaceful change. It happens whenever and wherever either a majority or minority of the populace has become disenchanted with dehumanizing treatment, policies and conditions of living. Usually, after a long period of victimization, exploitation dehumanization, oppression and suppression, the victimized, dehumanized and suppressed people kick-off a chain of events, whether carefully orchestrated or not, but which forcibly lead to a change in the status quo.

Microsoft Encarta Premium (2008) asserts that a revolution is a "*forcible, pervasive and often violent change of social or political order by sizeable segment of a country's population*". It goes on to assert that, a revolution is:

"...the most extreme political action of a dissenting group, a course taken generally when moderate and legal attempts to achieve recognition have failed. Even when fomented by a political minority, revolutions usually reflect a general climate of discontent."

The foregoing implies that revolutions, often than not, come as the last option after several peaceful and non-violent alternatives have proven ineffective and ended in futility. Often than not, the failure of non-violent attempts at effecting change arises from the resistance and suppression of the non-violent attempts by the powers that be.

History has a record of a good number of revolutions as well as the economic and socio-political reformations which they engendered. There are several documented instances of these and in spite of being painstaking and resulting in high casualties, many of these revolutions succeeded in shoving aside despotic and non-representative regimes, and in the process returning the nations to the right path for political, social and economic growth.

2. Literature and revolution

The term revolution is largely a political concept, it would seem. As a result, some might wonder what relationship exists between literature (drama) and revolution. Literature reflects life in its entirety – political, economic, religious, social, and so on. In showing these reflections, the literary artist decides which of the numerous facts of life he will foreground. Most times, the writer with a social vision has no choice but to attempt a socio-political reordering or restoration which normally calls for the revolutionary impulse.

Thus, literature and revolution can be said to have a symbiotic relationship as one is capable of inspiring the other. Some past revolutions have been known to inspire literary works just as some literary works have sparked off some revolutions. In line with this, Albert Hancock shows the influence of the French Revolution on the literature of the time when he says that *"the French Revolution came, bringing with it the promise of regenerated man and joy and regenerated earth. It was hailed with joy and acclamation...by poets, whose task is to voice the human spirit"* (7).

Allene Gregory corroborates Hancock's view when he says that...

"Literature began to take a new turn when the spirit of revolution caught the entire nation and turned things in a whole new direction. The newly acquired freedom of the common people did not only bring about just laws and living but ordinary people also had... the freedom to express themselves. Triggered by the revolutionary spirit, the writers of the time were full of creative ideas and were waiting for a chance to unleash them... which did well to pave the way to set a high standard for literature." (15)

Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*, a historical novel set in London and Paris is inspired by the French Revolution. *Ten Days That Shook the World* (1919) is a novel by an American Journalist, John Reed, about the Russian Revolution, which he experienced firsthand. *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution, 1891-1924*, is a novel also inspired by the

Russian revolution, written by British author Orlando Figes and published in 1996. An attempt at producing a list of such works here will be an exercise in futility. Suffice to say that there are more than enough of such works across the literary genres to convince us of the relationship between literature and revolution.

The online encyclopedia (encyclopedia.com) gives a vivid opinion on this relationship when it states that:

"...revolts are almost always accompanied by literature. Literature can inspire revolution. The written work can be the spark that starts a revolutionary fire. Literature has always emerged from dissent and thrived on conflict, and both war and revolution have forever been cauldrons for the creation of literature... for revolutionary writers, this usually means analyzing a situation and trying to inspire individuals to take up the fight."

The portion above shows that literature preys on revolutions in plot structuring and thematic exploration. So also can revolution be set rolling through literature.

Since drama re-enacts life through imitation of earlier actions, it is bound to reflect certain socio-political truths, no matter how sordid these truths may be. By this engagement, drama becomes an eye-opener to the oppressed as it bares the artless realities of life before them in a way that can push them to react. Amiri Baraka (Leroi Jones) sums up the role of drama in igniting revolution in his "Revolutionary Theatre" (1966). He is of the opinion that:

"The revolutionary Theatre should force change; it should be change... The revolutionary Theater must EXPOSE! [It] must teach [the people] their deaths. It must crack their faces open to the mad cries of the poor. It must teach them about silence and the truths lodged there...."

"The Revolutionary Theatre must Accuse and Attack anything that can be accused and attacked. It must Accuse and Attack because it is a theatre of victims. It looks at the sky with the victims' eyes, and moves the victims to look at the strength in their minds and their bodies." (1320-211)

Baraka's notion is simply that drama ought to be mobilized by an aggrieved set of people, to stir resistance and revolt, not just for the fun of it, but to free them from the constricting grip of their oppressors. The same view is expressed by Benjamin Bennett's *All Theatre is Revolutionary Theatre* where he considers drama to be a catalyst for social change, most of the change being achieved by forceful means

Lauren Myers also stresses that drama has the capability to cause revolution in her apt observation that *"theater brings many things to the community. It prompts reflection, analysis, and the ability to view things from another perspective. Theater can be the spark of a revolution"*. This view is also shared by Diana Taylor whose study of the Cuban Revolution and its influence on drama led her to state that *"drama, among other literary genres, remains the most piercing and ear-splitting weapon of revolution. This is due to its ability to instantaneously provoke an aggrieved audience into searching for arms against suppressive administrations"*.

In African literature, a good number of playwrights have employed ideologies that are influenced by revolution in their dramatic and theatrical renditions. Equipped with the socio-political and economic philosophies of Karl Marx and Frederiech Engles, these playwrights illustrate that the solutions to much of Africa's socio-political challenges can only be realized through protest and violence. Their revolutionary aesthetics come handy to awaken the lower class members to the truth and consciousness that have been concealed from them by the bourgeoisies who take undue advantage of their positions to exploit them physically, mentally, psychologically and economically.

Some African dramatists whose plays reflect revolutionary trends are Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Femi Osofisan, Ebrahim Hussein, Tess Onwueme, Arnold Udoka and Chris Nwanmuo. In the works of these playwrights, we often see them either reflecting certain historical revolutions in Africa or prescribing a revolutionary response from the people as a reliable solution to the ocean of challenges plaguing the nations of Africa in the contemporary world. For instance, in his study of Osofisan's dramaturgy, Muyiwa Awodiya notes that the revolutionary dramatist:

"...accentuates the common man, the downtrodden and ordinary people on the stage. He focuses his attention on creatures from the lower depths of the society... He imbues these "lower creatures" with positive, optimistic revolutionary potentials... [He] disowns religion or metaphysics as he asserts in existentialist terms that human destiny is man's own responsibility... and he quests to forge meaning out of the chaos in which society is entrapped, provides basic means of survival for the people and checks the continued misappropriation of history by a privileged few" (17).

As Awodiya notes, the revolutionary dramatist continually strives to uplift and empower the common man who is on the receiving end of unjust laws and policies.

Let us now proceed to further investigate the relationship between revolution and drama- how one can be a precursor to the other. This interrelatedness will be studied by focusing on two East African plays: Hussein's *Kinjeketile* (1970) and wa Thiong'o and Mugo's *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (1976).

3. *Kinjeketile* and *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* : the revolutionary archetypes

Ebrahim Hussein's *Kinjeketile* is a dramatic re-presentation of the historical struggles of the present-day Tanzanian people against imperialism in the hands of the mean, egocentric and unfeeling Germans. The revolt, known as the Maji uprising was started by the natives in the early part of the 20th century. The actual uprising gives the play, *Kinjeketile*, its plot. In the introduction to the play, however, Ebrahim Hussein makes it clear that the play is a sort of distorted version of the original events, as he states clearly that Kinjetile, the man, is a historical reality: he lived. His name was Kinjeketile Ngwale, and he lived at Ngarambe in what is now Southern Tanzania... However, Kinjeketile of the play.... is not an historical

evocation of the real man. Kinjeketile here is a creature, of the imagination, and although the 'two men' closely resemble one another in their actions, they are not identical (v).

The protagonist of the play, despite understanding quite well the danger of such, leads a revolution against German colonialists who heavily exploit and dehumanize his people. This exploitation (economic and physical) is captured in Bibi Kitunda's lamination that

"Our men work a lot, but they get nothing. We don't even have food in the house. When my husband comes back from the plantation, I have no food to give him. I have looked for roots, I couldn't get, I have looked for cassava, I couldn't get any. And anyway, some of these roots are most poisonous. Bibi Bobali's son died from eating some." (1)

The play opens in this kind of chaotic situation where Africans are drained of their energy to the limit, without being paid, in their own land. Bibi Kitunda's anger and frustration at the condition of things is also shared by Mkichi, a fellow Tanzanian whose bitterness is immeasurable. He wails thus:

"The Red Earth [German colonialist] is still in our country. What's more, he has taken our country from us by force. And we, like women, just stare at him. Now he forced us to cultivate his cotton plantation for him... He has got us paying him taxes.... We, like women, just meekly sit, watching him do what he wants with us, with our land." (5)

From the awful condition of things, there is no better way of reclaiming the people's ancestral land except through revolt. The natives slave in plantations under sunshine and rainfall, all to the benefit of alien colonial lords who have laid forceful claims to the people's heritage. The heated revolt led by kinjeketile takes place because there is need to have justice and liberty, which are two things that ought not to be denied any individual or group. Ayi Kwei Armah, in a commendable effort to provide justification for such revolutions as the one in view, observes that:

"...there have been numerous revolutionary movements and countless insurrections in history,... Maji Maji, Hau Hau, Mau Mau are only the garbled names uncomprehending observers have given to some of Africa's recent insurrectionary movements. Such movements... tend to become communistic when the revolutionary momentum they generate is married to the ideal of universal justice." (497).

It is this universal justice that captures Kinjeketile's revolt. The yearning for it is so strong that it stops the heavily disadvantaged natives from seeing the futility of their resistance and the great massacre that lurks. The hero, Kinjeketile, spurs his people with the prophecy of liberation from their ancestral god, Hongo. He makes them drink from the blessed water that promises protection and victory in the battle. The previously divided tribes unite without delay as they prepare to oust the white man and reclaim their land. The

unity, fostered by the need to fight for the people's right, is one crucial thing in the play. This is because for any revolution to be successful there must be careful planning and unity of purpose. In the play, Mgingo and Old Man stress that the people must be one:

"Mgingo: We came from far, to unite with one another, not to fight. If we fight one another, tribe against tribe, how can we hope to fight the white man? What we must first do is unite.

Mkichi: What we must first do is fight.

Old Man: But to be able to go to war against the Red Earth we must be united. To go to war disunited, fighting one another, is impossible." (7)

From the dialogue above, Mkichi is so utterly vexed that his thirst for violence is unquenchable. But Mgingo and Old Man understand the complexity of what lies ahead of them; therefore, they seek unity first before their attack can be effectively staged without betrayal.

Hussein's revolutionary approach is justified by the fact that he uses it to restore human dignity which the people have been denied. Not only are the people enslaved and exploited economically, but their daughters are also raped. We can spot such dehumanization where Kitunda's daughter, Chausiku is forcefully taken away from her parents only to be returned after having been brutally raped by the Askari, a colonial administrator. The dramatist aims to bring about social change through his radical approach, and as Uwem Affiah notes, such social change is achieved *"by bringing it about in the play or by ensuring that there is an agitation for it"* (144). Hussein employs both methods in *Kinjeketile*.

It is noteworthy that the revolution in *Kinjeketile* is not fully actualized as the heavy weaponry of the Germans leaves the Africans badly beaten and defeated. That notwithstanding, their action of courageously rising to fight for what is rightfully theirs is the first stride towards achieving the change and redemption they yearn for. This can be seen in *Kinjeketile's* declaration even after their failure, that the foundation for change has been laid and that the generations to come will live to see its actualization. In *Kinjeketile's* words to buttress this, he says:

"He wants me to say that the water was a lie. Do you know what that means? The moment I say that, people in the north, south, east and west will stop fighting. They will fall into hopeless despair.... A word has been born. Our children will tell their children about this word. Our great grandchildren will hear of it. One day the word will cease to be a dream, it will be a reality!" (53)

From the protagonist's utterance, it is derivable that he is ready to be martyred as long as the generations yet unborn will reap the dividends of his persecution. Reaping the dividends means being completely free from domination and oppression.

In wa Thiong'o and Mugo's *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, the condition is similar to that in *Kinjeketile*. This co-authored play is also an evocation of history, but this time around it is the Kenyan Mau Mau Rebellion commanded by the much revered and fear inducing Dedan

Kimathi - to free the people of Kenya from imperialism and to reclaim their ancestral land. In the preface to the play, the playwrights bring to our notice that the play stands not as an actual replay of history, but as an...

"...imaginative reaction and interpretation of the collective will of the Kenyan peasant 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." (iv)

Wa Thiong'o and Mugo go on to state that an African writer ought to show concern for his people by helping them fight their oppressors in their literary works. Also, they hint at the role of drama in inspiring revolution in their lucid declaration that

"...good theatre is that which is on the side of the people, that which, without making mistakes and weakness, gives the people courage and urges them to higher resolves in their struggle for liberation." (iv-v)

The hero of the play, Kimathi, refuses to break even when tortured severely. The reason for engaging in and clinging to such fierce revolts is summarized by Woman's speech that *"our own food eaten and leftovers thrown to us... we buy wood from our own forests; sweat on our own soil for the profit of our oppressors"* (18). The colonialists' domineering action is simply a mockery of the Africans, and under such circumstance, the option of revolt is second to none. Woman expresses hope similar to that expressed by Kinjeketile. She says:

"Let a thousand bullets be shot through our heads, but this I believe: one day, the soil will be restored to the people. Our land shall truly be ours." (21)

Emeka Nwabueze notes that the playwrights have portrayed such events to incite revolution. He asserts that:

"To foster the consciousness of the audience, the playwrights employ the melodramatic technique to awaken emotional reaction from the audience and lead them inevitably to a revolution." (167)

Even on trial, Kimathi does not break his resolve for the struggles. His staunch revolutionary spirit is not shaken; his determination is grim and unwavering. He questions and spitefully attacks oppression and subjugation by saying.

"By what right dare you, a colonial judge, sit in judgment over me?... an imperialist of law... I will not plead to a law in which we had no part in the making.... [which] silences the poor, the hungry, our people. (26)"

Despite the offers, they put before him to denounce his course, Kimathi makes it clear to the oppressors that he will never betray the people's struggle. He and other guerilla fighters of the Mau Mau are overly determined to fight tooth and nail until colonial oppression is quenched. This keen effort corresponds with Charles Nnolim's view that in East African literature, *"the revolutionary character has to enter the battle field to fight the white man from within"* (ix). Through the voice of Kimathi, wa Thiong'o and Mugo show their resentment toward oppression of any kind because it comes with injustice and suppression of will. This is evident in Kimathi's explosion that:

"There has never and will never be justice for the people under imperialism. Justice is created through a revolutionary struggle against all forces of imperialism. Our struggle must therefore continue."

Kimathi's statement above is used by the playwrights to state that revolution should be applied by countries of Africa and the world that have been bedeviled by neo-colonialism and all other forms of domination that come in form of aids, relief materials, loans, grants, economic policies, tariffs, and so on.

Kimathi's determination is so sturdy that he laughs even at the pronouncement of his death sentence. This tells us that only the body can be destroyed by death, but the spirit of revolution would continue to live and flourish in the younger generation. We can therefore vividly see the extent to which the playwrights are influenced by the revolutionary approach to salvaging issues of national concern.

The Trial of Dedan Kimathi is an artistic recreation of the heroic role that Dedan Kimathi played in the liberation of his people. Dedan Kimathi, a historical figure and the major character in the play is a symbol of relentless struggle and unyielding resistance. The playwrights delve into history by asserting Kimathi's value so that the present generation of masses can continue with the struggle for liberation.

The play is divided into four units, namely, the opening (prologue), the first movement, the second movement and the third movement. The strategy employed makes the play relevant to contemporary revolutionary movements. The opening serves as an explanatory presentation of the background to the Blackman's history, the re-enactment of the onset of slave trade and to the trials and tribulations of Kimathi and other members of the revolutionary movement. It also deals with the instigation of the Mau Mau revolution, the operations of the oppressive government against the revolutionaries and the arrest, detention and the trial of Kimathi at Nyeri.

In the *Trial of Dedan kimathi*, Woman subtly talks about how the oppressive government has oppressed the people of Kenya. She says:

"...our own food eaten and left over throw to us in our land, where we should have the whole share. We buy wood, from our own forests; sweat on our soil for the profit of our oppressors."
(18)

This statement indicates that the oppressors force the people into submission while they exploit and oppress them. It is not uncommon for them to engage in hoarding essential commodities, thereby creating artificial scarcity so as to make life difficult for the ordinary man who has no access to such commodities. In such actions against the majority lies higher revenue for these oppressors. The oppressors consist of the businessmen, religious leader, bankers and so on who are collaborators that exploit the wealth of people collectively. The collaborators in Kimathi's words are those who:

"Allow our people to continue as slaves of hunger, disease, sorrow in our own land while foreigners eat and snore in bed with fullness." (38)

The characters "Boy" and "Girl" are infused in their rustic mental state. "Boy" keeps on chasing and terrorizing "Girl" while the latter fails to put up resistance thereby encouraging "Boy" to keep on oppressing her. This implies that the oppressors have continued with their oppression because the masses have not revolted, rather, they have kept on running like the girl. The encounter between boy and woman gradually stirs the former to self-realization and this made him scrutinize the hazardous and harsh realities of his existence after the death of his father due to lack of proper medical care from his father's employers when the machine cut off his right hand, while working for the oppressor for a meager pay, and his father bled to death. This encounter consequently enables him, in the last movement, to acquire a more realistic perception of reality. The omnipresent voice of Woman after she left him declares that:

"Women's voice: The day you'll ask yourself... what I do so that another such grisly circumstance... that day you'll become a man my son." (22)

The voice of the Woman continues to stir boy and the moment he forgets and does anything contrary to the instruction of Woman, he usually feels guilty.

"Boy: as though she is watching me, admonishing me. I feel so ashamed." (11)

This shows that for there to be a revolution, there is need for self-realization which is what woman does by creating the awareness. The various sub themes in this play include those of political, religious and cultural oppression.

In the pre-independence days, Christianity, a religion, was used as a means of silencing the people and restraining them from fighting to reclaim their stolen land and pride. The practice is ongoing to this day. It also serves as a means of cajoling oppressed people into submission as seen in the role of the "Priest" who contributed in subverting the collective struggle of the Mau Mau peasants which Kimathi rejects. Kimathi antagonizes the Priest and tells him in clear terms that he is just a "pawn" on the white man's chess board. He goes on to tell the Priest that he finds the Christian principle of "turning the other cheek" in the face of victimization and oppression repulsive.

"Kimathi: Betrayal, Betrayal, Prophets, Seer, Strange. I have always been suspicious of those who would preach cold peace in the face of violence. Turn the other cheek. Don't struggle against those that clothe themselves as butterflies." Collaborators (49)

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. He cuts the picture of an ideal revolutionary. He resists the advances of the oppressive authorities which Henderson represents and in anger grabs Henderson's neck declaring that:

"Kimathi will never sell Kenya to the British or any other Breed of man-eaters now or in the years to come" (36).

Kimathi is steadfast in his commitment to the Mau Mau movement. Bruised and battered, he refuses to surrender or be swayed even when the agents of the oppressive government tries to cajole him into surrendering. He says:

"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 word "initiation" here alludes to the initiation of people to become members of the Mau Mau movement. Kimathi believes that no sacrifice is too much for the liberation of his people. His torture in the fourth trial is a biblical allusion which as it is similar to Christ's torture on the cross. The self-sacrifice of Kimathi in an attempt to liberate the masses by calling and leading them to rebellion against oppression are the crux of the play. At the point where Girl puts up resistance, there is a drastic change, just as Boy, the terrorist, beats a retreat. This is after the encounter between Boy and Woman. Girl says:

"All cowards, all brutes and bullies behave the same way. Show fear, a tail in your mouth and they threaten thunder and rain. They humiliate you, insult you and injure you. Show that you are a human being: struggle, fight back and it becomes their turn to run away, to flatter you, to try and make you their friends." (42)

This statement implies that oppressed people must come to the realization that success can only come by the determination to change their living conditions. Hence, the time for resistance has come and the masses have what it takes to resist all oppressors and all manner of oppression.

The paradox of liberation is that the oppressed are not united and they want to succeed over the oppressors. There is, therefore, need for them to resolve their differences and bury their hatchets in the head of their common enemy. Tribe 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 in the quarrel between Boy and Girl who, having resolved their differences join forces and serve as co-facilitators to the

subsequent liberation of Kimathi, who symbolizes the people. This is portrayed in the dialogue between Woman and Girl:

“Woman: (Proud) that is the way it should always be. Instead of fighting against one another, we who struggle against exploitation and oppression should give one another strength and faith till victory is ours

Girl: (despondently) it is hard. It is hard seeing that we are weak.

Woman: United, our strength becomes the faith that moves mountains. (60)

Woman, in a concluding note on the need for unity in revolution states that:

Woman: We shall continue to suffer, until that day, we can recognize our own, our true kinsmen, when we can correctly identify our enemies...” (73-4)

Unity and collectivism is needed to achieve this goal. Every member of the struggle is important. Responding to the call shows maturity irrespective of age and sex. 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. In the play, he says:

“...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.” (46)

The language of the play is also consistently revolutionary with the relatively simple poetry meant to enable the masses to understand. Kimathi admonishes his people to appreciate the need for unity and discipline as weapons capable of guaranteeing the success of the struggle:

“Kimathi:... Our love for freedom is our bullet. Our successes are our newspaper. But ... mightier than our best generals is our unity and discipline...” (69).

Revolution demands commitment on the part of the undertakers. Kimathi, focused and committed, confronts his oppressors with his undying resolve:

...But our people will never surrender. Internal and external foes will be demolished. (83)

The 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 or threats. But a true revolutionary must be focused and ready to face all consequences as seen in Kimathi. Kimathi symbolizes the entire society who must carry on a continuous struggle without giving up. The play is used to alert the masses to be aware that they have what it takes to be liberated.

4. Conclusion

This study has shown that revolution can influence literature and vice versa. The two plays studied, *Kinjeketile* and *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* have been examined, proving that playwrights can adopt drama to advance a revolutionary course. This shows the engagement of writers in politics in order to ensure that the society does not continue in its unfortunate decline. To this, wa Thiong'o in "Writers in Politics..." notes that "in the very process of articulating a people's consciousness, the writer is led into active political struggle" (477). It should be noted that such political engagement by dramatists is not wanton, but to re-order and restore societal and human dignity. Pertinently, this study will be wrapped up with Tonia Umoren's apt assertion that "the literary arena also feels obliged to lend a hand in this quest for an orderly and a tranquil society" (1).

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