THE DIFFERENT LEVELS OF STYLISTIC REALISATION IN SAM KAHIGA'S DEDAN KIMATHI

by

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Declaration

This project is my original work and has not been submitted to any other university for examination.

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This project has been submitted for examination with our approval as university supervisors.

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Dedication

This project is dedicated to my sons Jomo and Malcom X to whom the future belongs and to my dear wife Catherine Wangui, who patiently put up with my eccentricities

and

to the memory of all the freedom fighters whose sacrifices made it all possible.
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Abstract

The study set out to examine how effectively Sam Kahiga has employed the different levels of stylistic realization in his novel Dedan Kimathi. It examines the means by which he appropriates a historical event artistically. It also examines the reconstruction of Kimathi as a character in fiction, and how that reconstruction portrays him and his role in the Mau Mau Movement.

The study adopts a stylistic and new historicism approach to determine the interaction between Kimathi as fiction and Kimathi as historical reality, since the text cannot be known separate from its historical context.

The study has endeavoured to establish the fact that Kahiga has successfully reconstructed the image of Kimathi through the use of various narrative strategies such as the use of the omniscient narrator, imagery and the epistolary mode; and that he has recreated what might have happened. Webster in Studying Literary Theory posits, “The product of the creative imagination translates into the intentional fallacy (23).” Kahiga has successfully injected a ‘creative imagination’ dimension in his portrayal of Kimathi. He dwells on details on other events, situations and characters not directly implicated in projecting Kimathi’s image, but which afford the reader a broader view of the Mau Mau Movement.

Sam Kahiga has, despite the similarities and discrepancies between historiography and fiction rehabilitated Kimathi’s image; and has eschewed the extremes of historical distortion and artistic idealism.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DECLARATION</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1 CHAPTER ONE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.0 INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 OBJECTIVES</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 HYPOTHESIS</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 JUSTIFICATION</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7 SCOPE AND LIMITATION</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8 METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2 CHAPTER TWO</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE OMNISCIENT NARRATOR</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3 CHAPTER THREE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4 CHAPTER FOUR</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE EPISTOLARY MODE</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORKS CITED</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This study looks into how effectively Sam Kahiga has employed the different levels of stylistic realization in his novel Dedan Kimathi in order to transform what is essentially historical into artistic and fictional form.

The study uses both the stylistics approach to literary criticism and new historicism, as the analytical theoretical frameworks. Through stylistics we can discover the interaction between art and reality. New historicism approach is also useful because Dedan Kimathi is basically a historical novel based on an actual historical event, the text cannot therefore be separated from its historical context.

Dedan Kimathi was the foremost Mau Mau leader and the myth of the Mau Mau continues to fascinate literary scholars leading to various interpretations. We shall look at how Kahiga has utilized various stylistic devices to recreate historical events.

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There exists various conflicting interpretations of Dedan Kimathi and the Mau Mau Movement. Ngugi and Miceere in their play The Trial of Dedan Kimathi portray him as an ideologue championing the cause of the masses; while Watene in his Dedan Kimathi portrays him as a bloodthirsty tyrant.

This study therefore seeks to examine how effectively Sam Kahiga has employed different levels of stylistic realisation in his portrayal of Dedan Kimathi. Unlike
Marjorie Oludhe's historical novel *Coming to Birth*, which does not focus on any one individual; *Dedan Kimathi* does, and the study seeks to determine how successfully Kahiga has portrayed the historical Kimathi in fictional form. The study investigates the narrative strategies employed and their thematic and aesthetic implications in recreating what is basically a historical figure.

1.2 OBJECTIVES
The aim of this study is to examine and understand the image of Kimathi in the fictional work. The study seeks to discover how effectively this image has been reconstructed through the use of various stylistic devices and the meanings the artist ascribes to the historical character and event.

1.3 HYPOTHESIS
This study seeks to investigate the assumption that Kahiga has effectively exploited language to re-construct the image and the ideology of the hero of the novel *Dedan Kimathi*, a historical figure, artistically, and that the appreciation of the stylistic devices employed enhance the understanding of the Mau Mau Movement in general.

1.4 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY
Being one of the earliest Kenyan writers, Sam Kahiga has remarkably not attracted attention from literary critics. His novel *Dedan Kimathi* deserves to be studied because apart from Meja Mwangi’s *Carcass for Hounds* which has some resonance of
the Mau Mau Movement, it is the only other major work of fiction on Kimathi and the Mau Mau Movement that is in novel form. Other works of fiction on Kimathi and the Mau Mau, such as Ngugi’s and Miceere’s The Trial of Dedan Kimathi and Watene’s Dedan Kimathi are in the form of drama.

Plays are phonological and acoustic and are meant for live audiences: A play is communal while the novel is individualistic and has the advantage of what we could call a narrator’s narrator. While the character may speak directly, there is the added advantage of the narrative voice that explains events further. When, for instance, Kimathi the character speaks, in a play, the audience has to take what he says as it is without the advantage of an additional narrative voice that is not present in the play form; but is in the novel.

A stylistic approach to Dedan Kimathi is justified because through stylistics we can discover the interaction between fiction and reality. Being a historical novel, it is at the level of style that the historical events have been brought to life, “recreated” as it were into a work of fiction, rather than a merely historical rendition of facts.

A new historicism approach to Dedan Kimathi is also justified because the novel is based on a historical figure and a historical event. New historicism contends that all interpretation is subjectively filtered through one’s own set of historically conditioned viewpoints and that the text cannot be known separate from its historical context.

Being one of the few writers of fiction on the Mau Mau Movement, Kahiga deserves to be studied. By using language in a special way, literature immortalizes Kimathi in a
much more effective way than re-burying him would. Through literature he lives longer in the memories of the people. Just as Tolstoy reconstructs Napoleon in War and Peace, in the context of the specific tasks that he is involved in, Kahiga does the same with Kimathi in Dedan Kimathi. Tolstoy contrasts this tiny man with the mammoth task that he has undertaken. It would be interesting to investigate how a Kenyan author reconstructs a Kenyan historical figure, using language.

1.5 LITERATURE REVIEW

As one of the early creative writers in Kenya, Kahiga has co-authored Potent Ash, an anthology of short stories, with Leonard Kibera. He has also published Flight to Juba and When the Stars are Scattered, apart from writing various journalistic pieces. Kahiga has not dealt with the Mau Mau theme in any of his other publications except the short story The Village Pastor where he describes an episode where white soldiers interrupt life in a village in their search for Mau Mau terrorists. In his author’s note to Dedan Kimathi Kahiga writes:

Although this is a novel, a considerable amount of research went into the writing of it and it is based on real events governing the life and times of Dedan Kimathi. My purpose in setting out was to render as closely as possible and in a documentary fashion, the essence of the man’s spirit and the dynamics of the movement he led. (Author’s note).

The operative phrase here is ‘the essence of the man’s spirit’, because this is what Kahiga tries to capture through the use of language and the employment of various stylistic devices. His claim however that his is the ‘real’ Kimathi is debatable because there can never be the ‘real’ anybody.
The Tale of the Mau Mau Movement has acquired mystical proportions over time and it would be useful to briefly examine this mystique. According to Tabitha Kanogo in *Squatters and the Roots of Mau Mau*: “Establishing colonial rule in Kenya and attempting to turn the country into a white settlement area had a profound effect on the local African population.” African lands were alienated for European settler occupation, thereby dislocating many Africans who subsequently became wage labourers on European plantations. According to Kanogo again: “most of the settlers were themselves rather poor and could only afford to hire labour if it was cheap and could be paid for mainly in kind, in the form of land for cultivation and grazing.” This meant the introduction of squatter settler conflicts which eventually led to the eruption of the Mau Mau rebellion.

The settlers sought to curtail squatter expansion as an encroachment on their land, “the white highlands”, and the latter as giving the squatter economic independence, thus depriving the settlers a cheap source of labour. “The demand for land and freedom was central to the Mau Mau ideology.”

Richard Frost sees Mau Mau as “a Kikuyu uprising and not a general African struggle.” This is debatable but it must be acknowledged that the Mau Mau rebellion acted as a catalyst in quickening the resolve of the British colonial authority to relinquish power into the hands of African nationalists.

Frost however errs when he asserts that “Mau Mau was not a peasant revolt in its inspiration and leadership, but was an attempt by a section of the Kikuyu politicians to seize power, for which they needed the militant help of the peasants.”
Available evidence suggests that most politicians at the time were moderate and were not entirely comfortable with the armed struggle. Jomo Kenyatta, the most prominent among them, was never a member of the Mau Mau despite the efforts of the colonial government to link him to the movement during the Kapenguria trial. J. M. Kariuki, writing in his autobiography proves this point: "Although quite naturally most exofficials of K.C.A. took the new oath it had nothing to do with K.C.A. ... in all the statements and confessions made in my hearing by thousands of detainees in fourteen camps the name Kenyatta was never once mentioned as being involved in an oath (22)." Central to the Mau Mau philosophy was the oath. J.M. Kariuki again writes: "it was a spontaneous decision that they should be bound together in unity by a simple oath (22)." It was an oath of unity and brotherhood in the struggle.

According to Ruth First: "The generation of militant fighters was dead, imprisoned or black-listed. In its place was a generation that, for the most part, was ready to accept independence as a gentleman’s agreement, with the political process as a prerogative of a privileged elite (46)." Kenyatta belonged to the latter generation and had nothing to do with the Mau Mau rebellion.

The title Mau Mau is said to have been merely "a very skilful piece of double-talk in Kikuyu (23)." Children when playing and talking together often make puns with common words such as 'Mau, Mau' instead of 'Uma, Uma' (meaning, 'come out, come out'). According to J.M. Kariuki again; "It was always the duty of the oath administrator to see that there was a good guard to keep watch outside while the oath was being given. That evening, the guard was given instructions that, if he heard footsteps and suspected it was the police or an enemy, he should shout the anagram
'Mau Mau' so that those in the house could escape. It would be a clear sign only for those in the house, for the enemy would not understand what the words 'Mau Mau' meant (23).”

The term 'Mau Mau' therefore refers to the oath of unity rather than to the Movement itself, whose title was the Kenya Land and Freedom Army (K.L.F.A.).

Conflicting interpretations by European and African authors during the colonial and post colonial period and the resultant images in Mau Mau based fictions are brought out by the linguistic choices of the said authors, which solely depend on their ideological standpoints. Maughan-Brown in Land, Freedom and Fiction: History and Ideology in Kenya, examines the ideological bases and the resultant images in Mau Mau based on fiction, but this does not include a stylistic appreciation.

Literary critics cite discrepancies between the fictional portrayal and factual "historical realism" in Ngugi and Miceere's The Trial of Dedan Kimathi. Amuta in The Theory of African Literature sees the existence of similarities and discrepancies between historiography and fiction as the reason for "the rehabilitation of heroic figures who have suffered denigration and vilification at the hands of colonialists and imperialist historians and writers (157)" but he does not examine Kahiga’s Dedan Kimathi.

Chris Wanjala’s In Search of a Revolutionary Hero review essay in the Journal of Kenya Historical Review accuses Ngugi and Miceere of attempting to impose an
interpretation lacking conformity with factual history in their play *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*. Wanjala does not however look at Kahiga’s *Dedan Kimathi*.

Literature and history are complementary in fictional texts on a historical character like Kimathi. Aristotle’s view in *Classical Literary Criticism* is that in such an endeavour we are dealing with fictive “works of imitation (35).” According to him:

> The difference between the historian and the poet is not that one writes in prose and the other in verse ... the difference is that the one tells of what has happened, the other of the kinds of things that might happen. For this reason poetry is something more philosophical and more worthy of serious attention than history for while poetry is concerned with universal truths, history treats of particular facts (43-44).

Webster in *Studying Literary Theory* also points out that fiction is “the creative imaginative side of our thinking (22).” The creative writer dealing with historical characters and events in time past therefore chooses.

> A convenient way of arranging (this) knowledge ...
> As a way of ensuring that certain ideas and, more significantly, ways of understanding these ideas endure (22).

The product of the creative imagination translates in the intentional fallacy (23). Creative writers like Kahiga in *Dedan Kimathi* point out that though the characters or events he portrays are historical he has injected a “creative imagination” dimension in his fictional portrayal. Kahiga therefore explains in the author’s note that his endeavour is to present what appears to him as “the real Kimathi”, through fiction. This endeavour, as pointed out elsewhere in this project, is akin to chasing the wind, since there can never be the ‘real’ anybody.
Justa Wawira’s review of Kahiga’s *Dedan Kimathi* in the journal of Writers Association of Kenya Vol. 1, 1992 sees authorial objectives in writing it as primarily intended to correct the historical distortion that seems to have characterised other works on the subject. Wawira does not however deal with issues of language and style.

Mugai Kamau in his M.A. Thesis (2000) says that “Kahiga’s *Dedan Kimathi* implicitly seeks to negate the over-simplification of the earlier, villain/hero dichotomy in the two plays and seeks to ‘moderate’ as a way of giving an all-round treatment of Kimathi and the freedom struggle (40).” The intention is to bring the audiences closer to what Kahiga believes is the “real Kimathi” in this novel. Mugai contends that the portrayal of freedom fighters in the novel is not positively unequivocal because in *Potent Ash* a collection of short stories written by Kahiga and his brother Kibera:

Ndonga is passed off more as a deranged fugitive than a clear-headed freedom fighter with a humanistic sensibility as he explains to the young school boy the reasons for the armed struggle. Similar aspects appear in Kahiga’s hoped for “mature novel” recreating Kimathi and the Mau Mau experience (141).

Mugai does however touch on the narrative techniques employed in Kahiga’s *Dedan Kimathi* but he is mainly interested in how Kahiga balances Kimathi’s image vis-à-vis Ngugi and Miceere’s versus Watene’s portrayal in their respective plays. Mugai says Kahiga’s main stylistic weakness “is the excess details on other events, situations or characters not directly implicated in projecting Kimathi’s image (183).” Mugai is more interested in the “question of ideology” as the determining factor in judging Kahiga’s contribution in “educating us about Kimathi and his role.” Our study on the
other hand seeks to inquire into various stylistic strategies that Kahiga has employed to construct Kimathi’s image.

1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This Study has employed stylistics as a critical approach which “gives us a precise methodology for analysing the linguistic peculiarities of literary works” (Indangasi, 9). It has also taken advantage of new historicism.

This being a work of fiction dealing with a historical figure makes the stylistic approach the most appropriate since it assists us to evaluate how effectively or ineffectively the fictional Kimathi has been reconstructed. According to Aristotle in *The Poetics*:

> The poet and the historian differ not only by writing in verse or in prose. The work of Herodotus might be put in verse, and it would still be a species of history with metre no less than without it. The true difference is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen. Poetry therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history; for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular (30).

This ‘construct’ of what may have happened, is mainly achieved through the manipulation of language and the use of various stylistic devices. Katie Wales in her *Dictionary of Stylistics* notes that:

> The goal of most stylistic studies is not simply to describe the formal features of the text for their own sake, but in order to show their functional significance for the interpretation, in order to relate literary effects of the linguistic ‘causes’ where these are felt to be relevant (438).
H.G. Widdowson defines stylistics as "the study of literary discourse from a linguistic orientation (3)." The critic therefore interrogates how a writer has idiosyncratically manipulated language to achieve aesthetic effects in a literary text (Leach Short 3), (Indangasi 8).

Kaluga’s use of figurative language, symbolism and metaphors, plus his lexical choices and narrative forms are the means through which he constructs or deconstructs Kimathi’s image. A stylistic approach a textual criticism will help us determine our aesthetic appreciation of Kahiga’s Dedan Kimathi.

New historicism is also relevant to our study. The term new historicism was first suggested by the American critic Louise Montrose who defined it as “a combined interest in the textuality of history, the historicity of texts” it involves “an intensified willingness to read all of the textual traces of the past with the attention traditionally conferred only on literary texts”. New historicism is a historicist rather than a historical movement. It is interested in history as represented and recorded in written documents; in history as text.

Historical events as such, are irrevocably lost. The emphasis on the text bears influence of the long-familiar view in literary studies that the actual thoughts, feelings or intention of a writer can never be recorded or reconstructed. So the real living individual or event is now entirely superseded by the literary text that has come down to us.
For the new historicist, the events and the attitudes of the past now exist solely as writing and it makes sense to subject that writing to the kind of analysis formerly reserved for literary texts. As it were, the word of the past replaces the world of the past. It acquires an artistic autonomy.

New historicism accepts Jacques Derrida’s view that there is nothing outside the text in the special sense, that everything about the past is only available to us in textual form. The aim of new historicism is therefore not to present the past as it really was but to present a new reality by re-situating that past. Thus, historicism represents a significant extension of the empire of literary studies for it entails intensive ‘close reading’ in the literary critic manner on non-literary texts. Since Dedan Kimathi is a historical figure new historicism is quite appropriate as a theoretical framework in analysing Kahiga’s text.

1.7 SCOPE AND LIMITATION

For a comprehensive stylistic analysis, this study has confined itself to Kahiga’s Dedan Kimathi. This novel purports to be the ‘real’ story of Dedan Kimathi as opposed to Ngugi’s and Miceere’s The Trial of Dedan Kimathi and Watene’s Dedan Kimathi. It is therefore appropriate to analyse the different levels of stylistic realisation that construct the ‘real’ Kimathi.

The study focuses on the analysis of style and specifically how figurative language, symbolism, metaphors and other lexical choices and narrative forms are used to create this ‘real image’.
1.8 METHODOLOGY

This study has employed library research. A close reading and critical analysis of Dedan Kimathi as the primary text of concern has been undertaken. An extensive reading of other related texts has also been done. This includes other creative works by the same author, and others on the same subject by other writers and texts on literary criticism. All these, have served to illuminate the study.

The Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library, Kenya University Library and other libraries have served to provide the bulk of research material. The internet has also come in handy in providing information during the research.
Chapter Two

The Omniscient Narrator

According to Scholes and Kellog who examine the histor and other narrative postures in their work, *The Nature of Narrative*: “The histor is the narrator as inquirer, constructing a narrative on the basis of such evidence as he has been able to accumulate (265).” This is what Kahiga is doing with his omniscient narrator in order to give the reader the necessary background information on the Mau Mau movement.

According to Scholes and Kellog again:

The histor has been concerned to establish himself with the reader as a repository of fact, a tireless investigator and sorter, a sober and impartial judge — a man, in short, of authority, who is entitled not only to present the facts as he has established them but to comment on them, to draw parallels, to moralise, to generalise, to tell the reader what to think and even to suggest what he should do (266).

The narrator as histor is a primary narrative ingredient in *Dedan Kimathi*. According to Robert and Jacobs in their edition *Literature: An Introduction to Reading and Writing*, the omniscient speaker sees all, reports all, and knows and explains, when necessary, the inner workings of the minds of any or all characters (203).” It is through this device that Kahiga reveals how the Mau Mau Movement recruited its adherents from the demobilised, soldiers of the Second World War as was the case with Theuri’s father.

He came back at the beginning of 1946, the same year Kenyatta came back from England, and that was when her home became a meeting place of all
sorts of people who sang strange songs fervently. Certain words kept on being repeated, words like KAU, Olenguruone, Land and Freedom (13).

It is through this omniscient narrator that we are given the background to the rise and origins of the Mau Mau movement and those who first joined it, such as Brigadier Mugane Kago from Kiambu, who had been a carpenter in Nairobi before World War II.

At the end of the war, when he had returned home in 1946, he had tried to get back to carpentry, but the winds of revolution had swept him into another world of violence. A group calling itself the forty group was formed in January 1947, and many of his comrades in the second world war joined it. It consisted of young men who were no longer content to plead with the white man for their birthright; young men who now knew how to handle and even construct guns. Their motto was 'Say and act! The new movement appealed to Mugane's fiery nature. Instead of going back to carpentry, he found himself breaking into Indian shops, stealing money, guns and foodstuffs for the movement. This movement was the real beginning of Mau Mau (200).

What Kahiga has done is to describe the event in the third person. He is using the third-person point of view to inform the reader of the historical roots of the Mau Mau Movement.

Kahiga also employs the omniscient narrator technique to highlight the binding nature of the oath of allegiance to the Movement. It is this oath that literally cemented its unity of purpose, both in their quest for land and freedom and in their loyalty to the tribe. The oath was itself a mystic ritual with religious overtones.

The man giving the oath made each person wear a piece of goatskin around the neck and hold a handful of soil against the navel. There was an arch made
from two banana trees, sugar-canues and maize stems. The women and the girls were being oathed separately from the men. Each had to pass through the arch seven times and swear that if called by day, by night or during a storm to assist in the work of the movement she would obey without question (14).

The religious nature of the oathing ceremony is brought out by the belief in retribution should one betray the oath. The eye piercing ritual is symbolic of the organisation’s ability to detect one who breaks his oath.

There were other things too, like pricking two eyes of a goat seven times while making vows. The eyes were attached to a reed and still haunted her to this day for they seemed to be not just eyes of a goat but eyes of the movement. Eyes that could see when she faltered or failed to do her duty well. The eyes would see if she failed to help raise subscription or help someone in trouble or, worse still, if she dared to reveal any secret of the organization to a non-member (13-14).

The omniscient narrator further highlights the mysticism of the remaining part of the oath and its symbolic nature. The oath administrators have also borrowed the sign of the cross from Christianity alluding again to its quasi-religious nature.

She bit a piece of sugar-cane and inserted a reed into each of the seven holes of a goat’s neck-bone. She took seven bites of a goat’s thorax. The man then made a cross on her forehead with a mixture of blood and soil he held in a calabash. Their eyes met as he did so. He looked very solemn. And then the other initiates seized the piece of goat-meat hanging round her neck. They
counted up to seven and then said in unison, “may you be destroyed like this ring of meat if you break your vows!” and they broke the intestine (14).

The oath taken has binding obligations with a religious hold on the initiate. The blood used in the ceremony symbolizes the sacrifices in blood that is expected to be shed in war. The soil is symbolic of the ‘stolen’ land. The Mau Mau Movement, the omniscient narrator lets us know, is united and motivated by its desire for change from their colonial bondage to freedom. The meaning of the oath later dawns on one of the initiates, Agnes at a meeting of the men to name their armies and elect leaders for the new Kenya Defence Council.

She was struck by their pride and their discipline but, above all, by the fact that they took it all so naturally and had long accepted this as their way of life. The true meaning of the oath she had taken in a dimly lit hut soaked into her for the first time (19).

The omniscient narrator also highlights the eye-opening effect the Second World War had on African soldiers. Contact with distant places and the forces of other liberation struggles such as the Pan-African Movement and the Indian self determination Movement. They had also seen the vulnerable white man and discovered that he was not immortal after all, as he had hitherto portrayed himself to be. These factors greatly hastens their decision to use force for their own land and freedom. Now that they were trained in the art of war, the ex-soldiers organized themselves into an army. This is the same period that Kenyatta, who was perceived to be the think tank behind the Mau Mau Movement, but who denounces them as crude, returns from Britain and
energizes the struggle with his call for immediate freedom. The omniscient narrator also acknowledges the fact that Kimathi was not one of the demobilized soldiers.

It is through the omniscient narrator that the problems that beset the land and freedom army, especially the power struggle among the various factions is brought out. The differences between the illiterate fighters and the literate lead to fatal weaknesses in the army; giving a chance to the colonial intelligence services to infiltrate and ultimately defeat them. This split is epitomized by the struggle for overall leadership between Field Marshal Dedan Kimathi and Stanley Mathenge. "Kimathi had a big problem on his mind, [she realised later]. He was not the undisputed leader of all these people (17)."

This struggle, the omniscient narrator informs us, emanates from the fact that Kimathi is more charismatic and has superior leadership qualities to Mathenge’s though technically the latter is his senior in the Movements hierarchy. Kimathi is an educated and articulate communicator while Mathenge is not, so although Mathenge is the chairman of all Nyeri Battalions and Kimathi the secretary, his superior communication skills in comparison to Mathenge’s and his ambition for power make him overshadow Mathenge who could barely write his name and did little communicating (18)”. It is in this spirit that Mathenge boycotts the meeting called to elect a Kenya-wide council for the Movement by Kimathi retorting “Kimathi is just my clerk (17).”

The two leaders epitomize the split between the “educated” and uneducated in the sense of having undergone some formal schooling. The “uneducated” are suspicious
of the intentions of the educated or the “tie-tie” as they contemptuously refer to them. The fact that most leadership positions go to the educated is an indication of the marginalisation of the illiterate fighters. It is also a pointer to their continued marginalisation even when freedom is achieved. They are keenly aware that they form the bulk of the fighting forces while those who went to school find it more convenient to work for the colonial government. This is what Mathenge accuses Kimathi and his faction of in one of their rare meetings.

Since coming to the forest, you have surrounded yourself with friends who do little fighting but a lot of mischief. You like them because they are educated and have listened to them, never consulting us, the uneducated. And you know that this is our war, the war of the uneducated. The educated are in Nairobi with their white masters (256).

The omniscient narrator highlights the anger among the illiterate fighters and the use of the possessive pronoun “our” portrays the educated fighters as intruders into the Movement.

The omniscient narrator conveys this class consciousness and class divide among the fighters, and pinpoints it as a major source of friction and disunity in the guerrilla army.

Kimathi on his part is impatient with the uneducated faction of the Mau Mau fighting forces for the poor leadership they offer their troops and the evident disorganisation in their camps. The omniscient narrator brings out Kimathi’s frustration with the camp led by General Kabuku, who is illiterate. His fighters seem to only seek sustenance from the village reserves without doing any fighting against the colonial troops. Such
camps do not keep proper camp records, a fact that also irks Kimathi to whom records are vital for future restitution of lives and property lost in the struggle. They also do not observe proper security procedures.

These were all matters Marshal would raise with Kabuku while he was here, Kabuku would have a lot of explaining to do, like all the other generals who lacked imagination and initiative (8).

To combat this problem, Kimathi sends such armies west of the Aberdares where they will be cut off from their traditional sources of food, the fortified village reserves into which the rest of the populace has been herded into so as not to aid the Mau Mau fighters – and where they shall at least be forced to raid their food from the enemy (white settlers). This is compounded by the fact that Kabuku and his men will not eat game meat which is in great abundance in the forest:

Marshal, I can’t eat wild animals. And I can’t let my men cook wild animals. Wild animals are unclean, and might bring an evil influence upon our camp. We are at war and must stay clean. (48-49).

The superstitious nature of the illiterate Kabuku hampers his troop’s ability to sustain themselves in the forest and the result is that he is hit by desertions from his dissatisfied troops.

The omniscient narrator points out another phenomenon that arises from such desertions; break away units, known as ‘Komerera’, who unable to put up with the incompetence of Generals like Kabuku, or with the strict discipline of Kimathi’s personal army and who therefore desert to form their own small bands independent of any central command or control.
‘Komerera’ were becoming so many that if you strangled them all, it would badly hurt the Aberdares forces. Besides, not all of them were pests. Some like Thuo were just disgruntled hotheads who thought they could form their own fighting groups and do better than their superiors. Secretly, Kabuku wondered if Thuo wasn’t a better general. He was commanding only twenty men and had five rifles, but was reputed to have killed many homeguards (68-69).

The omniscient narrator also traces the genesis of the split in the Mau Mau Movement. The generals allied to Mathenge boycott a meeting to elect a new Kenya Defence Council on the grounds that Kimathi has summoned it, rather than Mathenge.

Stanley Mathenge did not come, many other generals were likely to boycott the meeting and that was why Kimathi looked anxious. But the number of arrivals was getting very impressive... and it looked like Kimathi had overwhelming support (18).

The split is further widened by yet another meeting that Kimathi summons, this time to elect a parliament for the Movement. The Mathenge faction boycotts this meeting also and it is therefore dominated by Kimathi’s people, the so called educated men. Even the few uneducated Generals who attend such as Mbaria Kaniu, eventually abandon him for Mathenge’s faction. Kabuku questions Kimathi’s motives.

Why didn’t Kimathi send out letters? How can a parliament be selected at such short notice? The two Generals shrugged. But the reason was obvious. Kimathi wanted his own men in, simple (114).
By coincidence the educated leaders of the new parliament also happen to come from the same area, Tetu, further widening the split on the basis of regional power sharing. Many from Nairobi, Kiambu and Murang’a question the legitimacy of this new parliament and feel that it is not representative enough since Kiambu has no member in it and Murang’a has only one

Kimathi’s idea on the other hand is to have “a closely-knit group of intelligent people who can meet easily and make important decisions for the whole of Kenya (170).” Due to the difficulties in communication, Kimathi feels that stretching the membership beyond the Aberdares would render it ineffective.

In retaliation Mathenge’s faction sets up its own rival parliament Kenya Riigi. The omniscient narrator in this way highlights the final split between the educated and the uneducated factions of the Mau Mau Movement.

The despised leaders with no education were planning to set up a parliament of their own under Stanley Mathenge; already they had a name for it – Kenya Riigi. That was still top secret. But there would be no way some people, just because of their superior education, could divide the kingdom among themselves after it had been won with the bloods of the non-readers (191).

Partly due to the heavy losses incurred by the Mau Mau army, and the desire to upstage the Kimathi faction, Kenya Riigi opens negotiations to end the war with the colonial government. This action so angers Kimathi, who considers it an act of treachery, that he arrests General Mathenge together with the other leading members of Kenya Riigi. Kimathi is primarily worried that Kenya Riigi being peopled largely
by the uneducated, might agree to unfavourable terms and lay down arms without achieving their goal of freedom. He correctly suspects British colonial treachery and feels he has to move firmly to deal with General Mathenge and his faction. This marks the beginning of the final disintegration of the Mau Mau fighting forces. The omniscient narrator captures even Kimathi’s ability to foretell what would happen if they are disunited.

The omniscient narrator also points out another important division within the Mau Mau armies. There are those armies that operate from the Mt. Kenya and Aberdare forests on the one hand and those that operate openly in the reserves, such as the army led by General Kago. General Kago is one of those who fall out with Kimathi at the very outset over the tactics to be adopted for fighting.

Scorning those who hid in the forest, he did all his fighting in the reserves as part of what was known as the Kenya Levellation Army (86).

General Kago has been in Kimathi’s custody after their quarrel but escapes to become one of the most formidable fighters the Movement has in the reserves. The omniscient narrator portrays him as a brave leader who rarely wastes time in mourning the dead, but who instead uses the death of his fighters to egg on the anger of his troops to fight with ‘anger’ and to show no mercy to the enemy. His audacity is such that the colonial authorities devote considerable resources in their effort to hunt him down.

Because of Kago, the whole of Fort Hall area was crawling with all sorts of Government forces – K.A.R.; Homeguards, Regular police, Tribal Police, Mounted police, the Devon, the Fusiliers and others (87).
Unlike his counterparts in the forest General Kago marches his troops in broad daylight, openly engaging government forces and attacking symbols of government power such as police stations and homeguard posts to replenish his army with ammunition and to kill off collaborators. Theuri who has been sent to join Kago’s forces by Kimathi and is used to the stealthy methods of those who fight from the forest, is amazed at Kago’s audacity for marching his troops openly in broad daylight.

There was a long column of men, about four hundred of them, marching fearlessly along the dirt road led by a man carrying the Mau Mau flag; Kago’s men marching defiantly in broad daylight, heading for the next target (89).

The other difference between Kago’s army and that in the forest, the omniscient narrator let’s us know, is in their appearance. While those in the forest spotted dreadlocked hair, Kago’ men were clean shaven. It is for this reason that he directs Theuri to be shaved, though Theuri does not understand why. It is only later that this is explained to him as a rite of passage; and the symbolism behind the action.

After Kago had escaped hanging he had led his first two hundred followers to the edge of the forest where he had made them swear that they would never hide again in the forest. And then in a ceremony that lasted several hours (because they had only one pair of scissors) he had their matted forest-style hair all littered on the ground with its swarm of lice. Then he had led his bald army into the naked land (94).

According to the omniscient narrator “Kago does not entertain women in his army nor does his army hide unless it has to (90).” It is through the omniscient narrator that we get to know the reasons behind Kago and Kimathi’s fall out.
... I was arrested when I dared to ask why so many girls were being forced to stay in the forest when nobody suspected them in the reserves, and they would have gone home quite safely. One of them was my own relative, and she wanted badly to go back home after bringing food. And I was arrested just for demanding her release from a general (91).

Kago, unlike Kimathi, does not see the need of female fighters in the forest and sees their stay as forced. He grows impatient “with all those cowards who just hide in the bush, only coming out when they are hungry (91).” He sees the retention of the girls in the forest as an excuse to exploit them sexually, and cannot conceive of the luxury of love in the context of war. Rather than seeing them as making a useful fighting contribution to the fighting in the forest, he views them as obstacles to the effectiveness of the fighting units.

General Kago’s army, though sustaining high casualty rates, inflicts considerable damage on the colonial forces and its agents. It is one of the most effective fighting units in the whole of the Mau Mau movement. The omniscient narrator points out the stark contrast between General Kago’s valiant army on the one hand and the forces from Kiambu on the other. The latter are heavily criticized. The Kenya Inoro Army as the Kiambu forces are known, “doesn’t have the best of reputations (205).” They are accused of having “left all the fighting to us, Generals from Nyeri and Murang’a ... (200).” They offer lame excuses such as the lack of great forests to launch attacks from, a position that is exposed by General Kago’s fighting in the open. Many units do not know the proper ways of maintaining a guerrilla camp and Kimathi, is particularly irked by their lack of proper records.
Record keeping had been almost non-existent among Kiambu warriors until Kimathi stressed its importance. It made a lot of sense to keep records, for how, in the end, could anybody show what he had contributed in the struggle? How could anybody be compensated for his losses without records? (202).

This omniscient narrator fills us in on the mentality governing Kiambu people as opposed to the fighting spirit that prevails in the other districts where the movement draws its support from.

The truth perhaps was that Kiambu was living under the illusion of being more progressive than the other districts. There were more “tie-ties” there than anywhere else. Kiambu was infested with low-grade clerks and technicians who felt they would be losing too much if they chucked off their ties and white overalls and fought a war they might not win (201).

The foregoing, according to the omniscient narrator are the factors that contribute to the schism within the Mau Mau Movement; and the omniscient narrator is able to foretell its eventual disintegration and defeat by the colonial forces. Attempts to reconcile the various factions prove futile and the colonial intelligence services under Henderson are quick to infiltrate and further weaken them.

These divisions within the movement, according to the omniscient narrator, lead to heavy loss of life among the fighters, the breaking-up of supply lines and the demoralization of the whole army. The colonial intelligence services set up pseudo-gangs whose primary purpose is to trap as many Mau Mau fighters as possible. These gangs are made up of former fighters who succumb to colonial propaganda and who
are in any case weary of the fighting. The promise of amnesty, if they confess and betray their oath is simply too tempting such gangs. The omniscient narrator describes these gangs so vividly that we are prepared for the final betrayal of Kimathi himself.

Government troops led by traitors who had surrendered, were killing Mau Mau with greater efficiency than ever before. Now the Government knew almost every Mau Mau hiding place, every food store, every “letter box,” every forest trick. What had taken Mau Mau such great pains to invent and perfect was now common knowledge to the enemy (289).

It is indeed one of these pseudo-gangs that eventually captures Kimathi himself.

Despite all these obstacles, Kimathi does endeavour to provide good leadership. He has the ambition to lead, the qualities and above all he is charismatic, though he too has his shortcomings. One of his greatest assets is the fact that he is fairly well educated, understands the aims of the Movement in a much broader sense than the other leaders, and is a good communicator.

Kimathi, like any other mortal is a mixture of many strengths and faults. He is portrayed from several viewpoints. The narrator juxtaposes him with many characters who help bring out his true artistic portrayal.

The omniscient narrator first makes us see Kimathi through the eyes of Agnes, one of the female fighters who sees him as “just a young man (15)” who reminds her of the Biblical Absalom because of his long hair; “although from his letter to ‘The People’ or to the ‘Community’ he prefers to think of himself as a second Jesus Christ (15).” Kimathi sees himself as a Messiah and a saviour of his people.
Agnes also alludes to his mysticism although she still views him as an ordinary human being.

His eyes were like any other young man’s eyes lingering with interest on a girl’s bosom and legs. But still, despite all that, there was a strange magic around him that made all the people, both old and young, fear and respect him (16).

His liaisons in the forest also portray him as just another man; for instance when he visits General Kabuku’s camp on a tour of inspection, the General assigns Agnes to him “to look after you and see to all your needs (9).” Agnes does grow so fond of Kimathi that one night they spent together and much later in different circumstances she is jealous of the fact that his attention is on another girl.

General Kabuku thought that she was still very angry with him. She was, but that was not the only reason she was not talking to him. The main reason was that she had seen Dedan Kimathi holding another girl. She had seen, not a saint, not a priest, not a Jesus Christ but a man. A man holding another girl with a better skin, better body, better looks than hers. Dedan, her Dedanim, had held another girl (221).

Agnes’ disappointment with Kimathi is highlighted and at the same time we read the mind of the undeified character. The omniscient narrator brings us a minute, ordinary Kimathi.

Through the omniscient narrator we also get to learn of his other romantic escapades, and he is in this way demystified and portrayed as just another man with ordinary
needs. He is a very romantic man, a side of him he does not like to display to the rank and file. His love affairs, however, have something of the callous since he seems to ‘use’ rather than ‘love’ his female counterparts in the forest. This also tends to reduce the mystic around him.

He never kept a girl permanently because of the fear that it might lower his esteem before his soldiers. He took what he needed from them and then got them transferred, which was cruel but necessary (220).

This portrays him as selfish and mean, a fact that cannot be got from the first person narrator. His behaviour also suggests that military affairs are foremost in his mind and his liaisons are to be seen as ‘relief’ from the tensions and concerns of the war; rather than serious love affairs. This side of him does much to destroy the image of the demigod that is ascribed to him.

It is, however, Kimathi’s charisma that contributes most to his mystic and the controversies surrounding the interpretations of his image and character. He is a highly focused man with a high sense of the sacred duty of his mission. His focus has a religious ring to it. He does indeed consider himself the people’s Messiah, a second Jesus Christ which is rather arrogant and self righteous of him. Though a firm believer in the traditions of the people, he does not confine his belief system to the traditional prayers of his people, to God ‘Ngai’ and the ancestors; he also believes in Christianity and has a Bible that he never leaves behind and from which he quotes frequently. Although he has been educated at the Church of Scotland Mission school, he has not forgotten about the old God of the Gikuyu people’ and how to pray to him under the fig tree, facing Mount Kenya. Because of his deep understanding of his people’s
customs, and his deep respect for them; he is “a leader of the young and the old (19).” His is a strange mixture of beliefs because as the omniscient narrator tells us:

He respected and carefully listened to certain old witch-doctors, and he himself was almost like a witch-doctor, the way he sprinkled honey and beer on people, slaughtered rams for sacrifices and so on. It was as if, in his fierce determination to lead the people to victory, he could not afford to ignore any power, natural or supernatural, that might help him in the overwhelming challenge that he had set for himself—(19).

Kimathi has merged Christianity and traditional religion into a single ideology that informs and justifies the aims of the movement. This ritualistic side of his personality enhances his mystic and his charisma among his followers. He frequently prays at the foot of holy trees the “Mugumo” (fig tree) of which there are several in the forest. The biggest of the fig trees and his favourite praying spot, uproots itself at the hour of his capture. This elevates him to the level of the mythical.

It (the tree) fell as a sign that the God of our fathers was with him. He had done his work. He went to rest. He is with God now (337).

This event, of the fallen fig tree, makes friends turned foes, such as General Kabuku, declare that “he was a man of God (332).” The omniscient narrator sees this as an act of symbolic significance. The analogy between Kimathi’s death and Christ’s is brought out. When Christ dies the cloth that separates the Holy of Holies is torn. This is an affirmation that he is more than human.

And then his Christian side also manifests itself before he is hanged; “he had written to a white catholic priest Father Marino. He said he was very happy, preparing for
heaven (337)." This religious dualism is one of the most complex facets of Kimathi's personality.

Kimathi's legendary mystical powers are also enhanced by his miraculous escapes and his uncanny ability to sense danger and avoid it. Although as General Kabuku argues, this may have been due to his familiarity with the forest.

Kimathi had been a very good scout. Because he was fatherless and extremely poor, he had to think of all sorts of ways of earning his school fees, and one of them was to explore the forest for seeds of rare trees which he sold, presumably, to the forest department. In that way, he had become very familiar with the forest, and already knew a lot of bush-craft even before Mau Mau started (328).

Still he seems to have some unexplained mystical powers that tend to elevate him to the level of the mythical. His encounter with Ruku when he is being hunted down serves to illustrate the point. Ruku has Kimathi in his gun sight but he says "when I pulled the trigger the gun wouldn't fire (323." This leads Ruku to conclude that, "he is not an ordinary man (323)." His men believe in his extra-ordinary nature literally. "They knew that there was a spirit that always warned Kimathi when death was at hand. It had saved him countless times and not once had he ever walked into a trap (319)."

The omniscient narrator also highlights Kimathi's organizational abilities. As Field Marshal to the army and secretary to the Movement, it is largely upon his shoulders, that the task of devising policy for the movement and ensuring that it is implemented,
rest. He is portrayed as an indefatigable worker constantly writing letters of instructions to his subordinates and others to foreign powers seeking for moral and material support. He constantly conducts tours of inspection to the various units of his army, to criticize the sloppily run camps and to boost troop morale. It is on one such tour of inspection that we get to know of General Kabuku's chaotic camp.

Kimathi does view the Mau Mau struggle not only as a struggle for his people's lands and freedom, but also as a Pan-African struggle. It is for this reason that the omniscient narrator portrays Kimathi as being quite anxious about those who endanger Mau Mau unity, the omniscient narrator asks of him:

How he can survive, how can we defeat the enemy if we think of Districts, Divisions and Locations? I never forget that we are fighting for the whole of Kenya, indeed for the whole of Africa (199).

It is also through the eyes of the omniscient narrator that the immense contribution of women to the liberation struggle is seen. Women do not only support the struggle materially, but also engage in actual combat. The omniscient narrator highlights Agnes Ndriti's role and makes her a heroine. She is, the most the most outstanding female fighter in Kahiga's Dedan Kimathi. She kills a homeguard and escapes to the forest. She hosts the village work committee, that oversees the operations of the Movement in her house and stores the supplies meant for onward transmission to the fighters in the forest. A nosy homeguard stumbles into the supplies and she is forced to kill him.

The devastating effects of the armed struggle on the lives of the community and especially the hard times that the women undergo are clearly brought out by the
omniscient narrator. Due to the confinement to "protective" reserves, meant to cut off any contact with the fighters in the forest no meaningful cultivation takes place and this leads to hunger, and malnutrition. The women are further subjected to forced labour by digging trenches around their villages to keep off the "terrorists" and other forms of communal labour such as paving roads and terracing land.

Despite all these hardships, the women remain loyal to the Movement and continue assisting it. Hannah, for instance, is the commander of the female guard in her sub-location and is tireless in the execution of her duties.

Hannah’s husband Josiah had recently been captured and detained, but she was still carrying on, determined to be strong to the end. She just didn’t care what hour or day they would come for her; she was ready (75).

Thus, the narrator, who knows everything also knows she was ready. She is responsible for organizing women to supply food, ammunition, and other supplies to the fighters. When occasionally the fighters come out into the villages, such as General Kago’s fighters, often do, the women offer them water and milk as a sign of their solidarity with them.

Some women, however, such as the beautiful Kabui from Rift Valley, are traitors to the cause; but these are an exception, rather than the rule. Baranaba, her lover, is forced to execute her, since he feels he owes it to the Movement having been her lover.

"And then she turned out to be a spy. She had taken that oath called the musical oath by which the government makes the traitors swear to betray our leaders (118).
But her betrayal of the Movement is not as callous as it seems on the surface. Kabui
“was convinced that Mau Mau was an evil movement. After all it had killed her
father (118).” The omniscient narrator reconstructs the other sides of the Movement –
the evil side, by portraying Kabui’s tragic death as wicked. She does have her motives
and to her the Mau Mau “were just murderers (118)” to be repaid by her services to
the Government. Baranaba too has moral reservations about killing her and seeks a
cathartic release by confessing his gruesome act to Agnes. The omniscient narrator
poignantly captures the tragic scene.

I expected her to struggle, but she came peacefully like a lamb and we went
hand in hand into the bushes as we had gone many times before. We looked at
each other – just like lovers do – and it was so strange looking at each other
like that when there was only death now between us. I asked her if she wanted
to pray first before I ... before I strangled her and she said no because ...
because she was certain her guardian angel was already by her shoulder
waiting to carry her soul to heaven. She wasn’t guilty of being against us
(118).

The ellipses emphasize the horror that Baranaba feels for the task at hand. This by
extension highlights the moral dilemma that the fighters face in various replicated
situations.

Others such as Rebecca are also opposed to the Movement on matters of Christian
principle. Christianity thus undermines support for the Movement especially among
that segment of the community that is made up of fanatical Christians. The brutalities
inflicted on the people by the government troops, slowly change Rebecca’s ideology,
especially after her daughter Mumbi is raped. "Before this shocking incident, Aunt Rebecca had identified herself with the white side, the civilized side (165)." But now, though still Christian, "she was on the fence rather than in a hostile camp (165)." However, the above, as earlier stated, are exceptions; the majority of the women folk are pro Mau Mau.

The omniscient narrator gets into the sensibility of men and women in love and is able to highlight the fact that they are not committed to the liaisons beyond a given range. He cushions the reader from possible empathetic imminent heartbreak.

The omniscient narrator points out the blossoming of love even in conditions of war. Despite all the hardships the fighters undergo, love still manages to bloom among them. There are numerous liaisons among the fighters though prostitution is strictly forbidden. The female fighters find 'husbands' from among the male fighters and although they are generally faithful to their partners, this arrangement is informal. When, for instance, Kimathi pays a visit to General Kabuku's camp, he finds him "being warmed by a young girl called Waciuma, who had become his mistress after his former girl had vanished with other deserters (2)." Agnes, who has lost her forest boyfriend Kinyua, also keeps Kimathi 'warm' for the duration of his tour of inspection to their camp, and he is impressed by her qualities. "She combines some of the best qualifies our women have. Obedience and humility plus an ability to bear great hardship with courage and without much complaint (54)."

The omniscient narrator highlights the transient nature of the love affairs in the forest and the fact that the fighters are aware that these liaisons are temporary at best, since
death stalks them all the time. Agnes is aware that she might part from her current lover Baranaba at any moment and guards her emotions against such an eventuality.

...She knew very well that one day, he would be torn away from her, and she had built a safe wall around the same emotions she abandoned herself to

And so when Baranaba dies, Agnes soldiers on. Her friend, Kirurumi Ndani's love affair with Major Gaitho is also cut short the same way.

(Major Gaitho lost four soldiers when the enemy opened fire. Kirurumi Ndani was in the middle of the river when bullets hit her and her body floated quietly down the stream). That was the way of the forest (134-135).

These liaisons lead to the birth of Mau Mau babies in the forest. Agnes, after becoming General Kabuku's mistress, bears him a son with whom she emerges from the forest after the end of the war since she refuses to surrender and go home after she gives birth to him. Agnes Ndiritu is the very epitome of female courage and dedication.

Through the omniscient narrator, we also see the harmful role played by British colonial propaganda on the movement and its demoralizing effect on the non-combatant segment of the population. The colonial intelligence services under Ian Henderson are the principle agents in this disinformation campaign, colonial propaganda is also ably guided by Africans loyal to the government who are afraid of what Mau Mau would do to them if power ever came into their hands. One of the tactics the government employs is to broadcast from aeroplanes to the fighters of the hopelessness of their struggle. One such broadcast highlights the failure of
negotiations and the impending destruction of Mau Mau. Surrender is offered as the only alternative.

TO ALL THE MAU MAU FIGHTERS STILL HIDING IN THE FOREST.
TODAY THE 20th OF MAY, THE NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN YOUR LEADERS AND THE KENYA GOVERNMENT CAME TO AN END. FIGHTING IS TO CONTINUE. THIS IS YOUR LAST CHANCE TO SURRENDER. SURRENDER NOW WITH YOUR ARMS AND SAVE YOUR LIVES (286).”

Such propaganda inevitably further weakens the Mau Mau Movement which is already divided by leadership wrangles between Kimathi and Mathenge. The omniscient narrator, finally captures the eventual disintegration and defeat of the Mau Mau movement epitomized by the capture of its most prominent leader; field Marshal Dedan Kimathi. The omniscient narrator notes:

By the end of 1955, the Gikuyu and Mumbi Land and Freedom Army had ceased to exist, with most of the leaders dead or in detention. The beginning of its collapse could be traced back to 1954 when about 30,000 of its supporters in the towns and reserves (the Townswatch Battalion and the Gikuyu & Mumbi Trinity Army had been swept away in the operation Anvil, following General China’s capture. With the supply line thus cut off, the army had immediately began to lose its strength and morale. By the end of the surrender talks, a year later, few soldiers wanted to carry on with the fighting and although the talks collapsed, many surrendered anyway, preferring detention to the hardships of the forest where there was no one to lead them (300).
The omniscient narrator’s tone highlights the pathos of the movement by narrowing down to the human element of defeat. The narrator’s tone shows his sympathy for the losing fighters. The disintegration of the Mau Mau fighting forces is therefore nearly complete, and only four prominent Mau Mau Generals remain in the forest: Dedan Kimathi, Kahiul-Itina, Ndung’u Gicheru and Kimbo; each on his own. Kahiul-Itina is captured by the colonial forces and is hanged for refusing to co-operate in the search for Kimathi. Gicheru and Kimbo are also eventually captured, and the hunt narrows down to Kimathi.

When it becomes obvious that the struggle has come to an end and that there is no hope in rebuilding the land and Freedom Army; Kimathi gathers around him his most faithful disciples and carves out for himself a large area of the Aberdares forest. He forbids all other Generals and fighters to enter it. The omniscient narrator brings out his paranoia when he says:

He gave orders to shoot on sight all intruders, adding the number of those who violently hated him. Apart from his chosen fifty, all other human beings were his enemies (303).

His keen instinct for danger, coupled with his mistrust of everything and everybody around him, enables him to elude the government forces for a time. His mistrust is amply highlighted by the fact that “he trusted no one, not even his woman and would sometimes vanish for days (304).” He turns increasingly to prayers for “he always regarded himself as a man of God, chosen to lead his people like Moses or Jesus and was never without a Bible. (304).” The anger, sorrow and sense of despair in him is reflected in his prayers and the book of psalms is at this time one of his favourite books in the Bible.
The omniscient narrator seems to suggest that Kimathi’s fixation on religion is mainly an act of self preservation. His prayers are only heard by the omniscient narrator. The anger, sorrow and despair reflected in these prayers remove the mystic around him, revealing the vulnerable man on the run. By restricting others to inhabit or even visit his territory, he deserts his people, an allusion again to the Gethsemane atmosphere. By restricting himself he becomes a hermit. The Kimathi we see ordering Generals is at the end a shadow of himself.

Kimathi has a strange dream in which Ngai takes him to a fig tree and declares to him, ‘This is my house in the forest and here I will guard you (306).’ From then on he is obsessed with finding God’s holiest tree and he does not pass any ‘Mugumo’ tree without praying. In this way the omniscient narrator lets us know that Kimathi never finds the tree of his dreams but there is one old fig tree he especially loves, mightier than the rest, that does crash down at the hour of his capture.

“There was no storm, no strong wind and yet the tree was falling (330)!”

This leads one of his lieutenants, Theuri; to the conclusion that Kimathi was a man of God. “It fell as a sign that the God of our fathers was with him. He had done his work (337).”

The foregoing are just but some of the issues highlighted by the use of the omniscient narrator as a stylistic device. Most of the historical facts dealt with in the text are brought out through this device.
The medium of fiction and of all literature is language, and the manipulation of language – the style – is a primary skill of the writer. (Roberts and Jacobs 60). Figurative language is a major component of style. Figurative language constitutes the use of figures of speech such as allusions, symbolism, metaphors, similes, personification among other forms of imagery. This process entails an imaginative comparison between two things. Figurative language makes objects described in the text more vivid.

H. Coombes, commenting on the use of figures of speech as an aspect of imagery asserts:

In a good writer’s hands, the image, fresh and vivid, is at its fullest used to intensify, to clarify, to enrich; a successful image helps to make us feel the writer’s grasp of the object or situation he is dealing with, gives his grasp of it with precision, vividness, force, economy, and to make such an impact on us, its content, the stuff of which it is made, can’t be unduly fantastic and remote from our experience, but must be such that it can be immediately felt by us as belonging in one way or another to the fabric of our own lives (45).

Henry Indangasi observes:

Figures of speech, which operate on the principle of comparability, can be said to enhance the semiotic character of language. By comparing phenomena in nature it becomes easier for us to cognize reality; reality is cognized in its fullness (103).
The figures of speech used in turn indicate the writer’s tone. According to Roberts and Jacobs, “tone refers to the methods by which writers and speakers reveal attitudes or feelings (229).” Tone refers to those techniques of presentation that reveal or create attitudes, and the choice of figures of speech are a major factor in the creation of tone.

The choice of names in Kahiga’s Dedan Kimathi is for instance symbolic in most cases, and is a commentary on the character’s qualities or defects.

According to Roberts and Jacobs “a symbol is usually a person, object, place, action, group, artwork, or situation. It has its own identity, and may function at an ordinary level of reality. Often there is a close relationship between the symbol and the things it stands for, but the symbol may also have no apparent connection. What is important in that symbols extend beyond their immediate identity and point toward additional levels of meaning (326).” A symbol therefore uses one thing to refer to something else.

One of the Mau Mau Generals is called Kabuku, meaning ‘hare’ in the Gikuyu language. According to Gikuyu trickster narratives, the hare is considered to be a very cunning animal who always manages to outwit bigger animals. General Kabuku, true to his name, is a calculating character who is adept in the politics of the forest. He is one of the illiterate Generals who is implacably opposed to Field Marshal Kimathi for his (Kimathi’s) apparent favouritism of the educated fighters in the forest. He is allied to General Mathenge and he never misses an opportunity to egg him on in their quarrel with Kimathi and hence considerably contributes to the split within the Mau
Man Movement. Kabuku who is not a member of Kimathi’s newly elected parliament tells General Mathenge:

Get to the bottom of this parliament, tell them that it should not be for North Tetu alone. Other Divisions have sacrificed their sons too. Fight for your position, Stanley. You are a fine fighter and Kimathi cannot defeat you (146).” To General Kabuku, who has suffered considerable criticism from Kimathi, Mathenge is “the only leader (146).” General Kabuku also calls himself Lord Aberdares denoting the fact that he is the terror of the Aberdares as far as the enemy is concerned. Marshal Kimathi’s guide in the forest is called Gumba. Gumba is the Gikuyu name for a tribe of dwarfs that was said to have once lived in the forest, and who were experts in bush-craft. Gumba’s name is apt since he is both short and well versed in bush-craft. “He had long endeared himself to everyone for his knack of interpreting forest clues that were invisible to everyone else. (1).” He is indeed one of the men “who taught bush-craft to the young recruits in the forest (1).”

Many other Mau Mau Generals also give themselves symbolic names, indicative of their fighting prowess. One such General calls himself Kahiu-Itina literally meaning ‘Knife in the arse’, symbolizing what he does to the enemy. Field Marshal Kimathi himself has the code name ‘Matemo’, meaning the one who cuts’. This suggests that he is the keen cutting edge that keeps the colonialists on edge. General Mathenge has the code name ‘Kirema-thahu’, meaning ‘the one who cannot be touched by evil’. This suggests that General Mathenge is an upright man, who is fighting for a just cause, and who is unblemished. The fact that he is fighting on the side of justice suggests that no evil can harm him and that no matter the might of the colonial
armies, he is indestructible. Captain Vido is also known as Ndururi Gititika the latter name meaning ‘one who pushes something burdensome’. The burden here is obviously the colonialists and Vido views himself as one who has the task of pushing them out of the black man’s country. One of the leaders of the break away fighting units in the Mau Mau Movement – the Komera – is known as ‘Thwariga’ meaning antelope. This suggests that he is very swift and unfit for units such as those led by General Kabuku and other regular units since as his name suggests, he is not amenable to discipline. The fact that he raids General Kabuku’s unit and forcefully takes away his rifles bears out the significance of his name.

One of the General Kabuku’s fighters is known as Mucarica, literary meaning ‘the whip’. He is Kabuku’s best tracker, and his name becomes him, since he is the one who ‘cracks’ the whip in as far as tracking and leading other fighters on “the kind of trail only expert bushmanship could interpret and follow (98).” Sergeant Kana Kehoti is one of the youngest fighters in the forest. His name means ‘a child who is able to take care of himself’ and therefore aptly captures the fact that though he is very young, that has not prevented him from volunteering for combat duty. Brigadier Mai Maruru’s name means ‘bitter water’, symbolizing the fact that metaphorically the enemy finds him very “bitter”. General Kirihinya’s name on the other hand means one who is strong; this is symbolic of the fact that he is strong enough to contend with the enemy. The female fighter Kirurumi Ndani’s first name means ‘one who roars’ and is symbolic of the fact that she is courageous. Kirurumu Ndani is a nickname and “her charms had helped some homeguards and K.A.R. soldiers in her area to an early grave at the rate of one a week (131).” General Matenjagwo’s name means, ‘one who is not shaven’, referring to the trademark Mau Mau dreadlocks. Muhonia’s name
means ‘healer’ and he works at Nyeri hospital. His name is therefore symbolic of this profession and it is to him that Kimathi writes when he needs medicine. One of the leaders of the pseudo-gangs is called ‘Hungu’, Gikuyu for ‘hawk’. This is symbolic of the destructive nature of these gangs, who like a hawk prey on the ‘chicks’ (the people). One of the collaborators in the village reserves is called Wangero Mbugi. The name Wangero means ‘one who commits atrocities’. Wangero is a cruel brute who is a trader and who therefore feels he has a lot to lose if he identifies with the Movement. He is an agent of the colonial forces and his excesses against the people are such that his case is personally handled by Marshal Kimathi. His second name Mbugi, literally means the bell that is tied around the neck of a lead animal. The noise made by the bell suggests that Wangero cannot heed the warnings being sent him since the tinkling of the bell prevents him from hearing. His name is therefore symbolic of his nature.

The various armies in the Mau Mau Movement also have symbolic names. The Townswatch Battalion is for example based in the urban centres and its primary purpose is to raid business premises and to levy dues from the populace in order to keep the armies in the forest supplied. ‘Townswatch’ is therefore symbolic of their function which is to literally ‘watch’ the towns. General Kago’s army is known as the Kenya Levellation Army. The name ‘Levellation’ is symbolic of the army’s policy of ‘levelling’ the enemy to the ground. The Gikuyu Iregi Army’s name is also symbolic. The word ‘Iregi’ in the Gikuyu language means ‘to refuse’. The army’s name is therefore symbolic of the fact that they have rejected colonial oppression. The Kenya Inoro Army’s name is equally symbolic. ‘Inoro’ means a whetstone. The army’s name therefore suggests the sharp cutting edge of the knife, which it considers itself to be.
This army is however not held in very high esteem and a report to Kimathi on its operations partly reads. “Although they were given the name of Inoro they are not worthy of that name. Had it not been for their former leaders and respect for those overseas, this name would be withdrawn (228).” General Kabuku calls his army the “Number one Rwada Battalion. Royal Western Aberdares Destruction Army (203).” The word “destruction” symbolizes its primary purpose as that of causing mayhem among the enemy.

The colonial forces on their part also design various campaigns against the Mau Mau Movement which they give symbolic names. One such operation is code-named ‘Operation Hammer’. The name ‘hammer’ is symbolic of the ‘hammering’ that they unleash on the Mau Mau forces. Unfortunately it does not prove to be very successful. “It was an expensive operation, lasting about a week, but it netted only a handful of Mau Mau (239).”

Another operation is code-named operation Broom. This operation is symbolic of the fact that the colonial forces will sweep away the Mau Mau Movement but it again proves to be a failure. “This one caught no one by surprise, and there were hardly any casualties (239)”. Operation Anvil, which again is symbolic of ‘hammering’ the Mau Mau into smithereens is however more successful. Acting on information supplied by those who surrender, it manages to sweep away about 30,000 of Mau Mau supporters in the towns and reserves (the Townswatch Battalion and the Gikuyu and Mumbi Trinity Army) which are responsible for supplying the fighters in the forest with ammunition and other necessities. “With the supply pipeline thus cut off, the army had immediately began to lose its strength and morale (300).”
Kimathi also has a number of memorial halls constructed in the forest for the purposes of hosting forest gatherings. The name given these halls is also symbolic. “We shall build great halls in this forest”, Marshal had said to Theuri and Vindo one day. We shall call them Nyakilelo Halls (185).” Kimathi himself explains the symbolism behind the name:

Nya stands for Nyandarwa mountains, which the British decided to call the Aberdares. These mountains. The first K stands for Kapenguria where Kenyatta and others were tried by our enemies, Ki for Mount Kenya which we ourselves call Kirinyaga. Le stands for O’Lengurone that place of bitterness where our people were first exiled and lo for Lokitaung where Kenyatta and others were exiled. Nyakilelo (185).

Kimathi envisages the halls as shrines “which future generations can pay homage to (185).”

One such Memorial Hall built of bamboo is set up at a place known as Mihuro; the hall does not however, end up with the name Nyakilelo since the leaders come up with a better name – Kenyalekalo. This is again symbolic of “the nerve-centres of the struggle (188).” Mt. Kenya Nyandarwa, O’Lengurone, Kapenguria and Lokitaung. The various stages of the Movement are therefore aptly encapsulated in the symbolism of the hall’s name.

The Kenyalekalo Memorial Hall is more than just a meeting place, it is for the fighters something akin to a religious shrine. General Kabuku is annoyed by one of the young fighters who is “walking around with his circumcision showing (204).” (Meaning his
clothes are extremely tattered and do not adequately cover his nakedness) because he regards the hall as a "tabernacle (204)" and one should therefore dress 'decently'.

Closely connected with symbolism is the use of allusions. Symbols often allude to other works such as the Bible, history, myths and legends. Allusions like symbolism enriches meaning. According to Roberts and Jacobs, "allusion is the adaptation and assimilation of unacknowledged brief quotations from other works and references to historical events and any aspect of human culture (771)." Allusion therefore recognizes the broader cultural environment of which the work of art is a part. It also assumes a common bond of knowledge between the artist and the reader. Allusion compliments the past and assumes the reader is able to recognize it and find new meaning in it in its new context.

Kahiga's Dedan Kimathi extensively employs allusion as an aspect of style. The text is especially rich in Biblical allusions. Agnes Ndiritu's first impression of Kimathi is for instance expressed in Biblical allusion. "The only really significant thing was his hair which reminded her of the hair of the young man, Absalom, in the Bible. In fact she couldn't help thinking of him as another Absalom, although from his letter to 'The People' or to the 'community' he preferred to think of himself as a second Jesus Christ (15)." Allusion is used to bring out Kimathi's perception of himself as a messianic figure on a mission to liberate his people from the shackles of colonialism.

Agnes does also view Kimathi as a latter day Jesus. This is clearly brought about in a conversation she holds with her Aunt Rebecca who is urging her to surrender.
“Think about your soul. Jesus wants it. Come out of the darkness of this evil forest. Come out into the light and embrace Jesus.”

“Jesus. I have embraced Jesus, and I serve him. Not the same Jesus you know, Aunt Rebecca.”

“Which Jesus?”

“Dedan Kimathi. (242)”. This allusion to Jesus helps bring out Kimathi’s messianic mission.

Agnes is further aware of the fact that not everyone would live to see freedom; that some people would pay the ultimate sacrifice – that of their life. She expresses this sentiment through yet another allusion to the Bible. “Just like many children of Israel did not live to see Canaan, the promised land. One must do his or her duty without thinking about rewards or about the dangers involved (31-32).” Agnes thus equates the attainment of freedom with the Biblical journey of the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt to the Promised Land.

One of General Kabuku's mistresses, Wangeci expresses the same sentiments using a Biblical allusion, when she tells the General, who is disappointed that he has not been elected to the Mau Mau parliament that: “This is a time of fighting, not dividing. This war will take many years. Perhaps none of us will live to cross River Jordan into Freedom-land (135).” This alludes to the crossing of the children of Israel of the River Jordan over to the Promised Land.

Brigadier Gathitu Waithaka also alludes to the attainment of freedom in Biblical terms when he is accidentally shot by one of his soldiers. His wound is fatal and he remarks:
“I won’t see the Kingdom (180).” He goes on to add, “We shall all die,” W. G. said, “I am not the first, I’m not the last.” You who will live, carry on. And take care of the Kingdom (181).” The attainment of freedom is here equated with the coming of the Kingdom of God at the end of the world.

Kimathi sees an allusion to the defeat of the colonialists in the Bible and he quotes from the Book of Isaiah to justify this belief.

“In the forest of Arabia shall ye lodge, ye servants of Dedanim. The inhabitants from the land of Tema brought water to him that was thirsty, they presented with bread he that fled. For they fled from the swords, from the drawn sword and from the bent bow, and from grievousness of war. For thus has the Lord said unto me: within a year, according to the years of an hireling, and all the Glory of Kedar shall fall ... (53).” [sic]

“The companies of Dedanim (180)” he sees as his armies in Nyandarua fighting for freedom. Kimathi is however aware of the odds against his army and equates the struggle with that of the Biblical David who managed to kill the giant Philistine, Goliath with a sling. He sees his forces as the underdog David fighting against the well armed colonial forces. “We are David, using home-made guns against bombs (180).”

The songs that the freedom fighters composed were political, but with a religious ring to them, for this was a holy war, the war of an oppressed people trying to free themselves of the shackles of slavery. The titles of some of the songs therefore allude to events in the Bible. One such song is called “The Sword of Jehovah,” alluding to
the fact that it is mighty enough to strike against the foe. Another is called “The Chariot of Elijah.” Just like God had sent a chariot down from heaven to take the prophet Elijah away, so shall he send the chariot of freedom to the troubled children of the house of Mumbi. (Mumbi according to Gikuyu mythology is the mother of the Gikuyu people).

General Kago’s soldiers also adapt the Christian hymn ‘Onward Christian Soldiers’ to their own purposes by replacing the word ‘Christian’ with the words Mau Mau’. The song thus goes “Onward Mau Mau soldiers marching as to war! (149).” This again alludes to the holy nature of this war. When General Kago’s army runs out of ammunition, he uses another Biblical allusion on the necessity of getting replenishments by waylaying the enemies supply trucks he says: “We can’t expect manna from heaven (150).” This alludes to the food that God dropped from the heavens to feed the famished Israelites in the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land.

The mercilessness of General Kago’s soldiers is also brought out through yet another Biblical allusion, when they capture three white soldiers.

They screamed in agony as Sergeant Thairu, with masterly strokes, curved out their bellies, letting the intestines spill out, in the most horrifying form of death imaginable. They filled the forest with their howling until at last, they grew limp and their souls went to their own white heaven or hell (160).

The idea of ‘heaven’ or ‘hell’ is taken from the Bible, which teaches that the destination of the soul to either of the two places is determined by the good or the evil
actions that the person engaged in while alive. In this particular instance, the souls of the white soldiers go to their own white heaven or hell, suggesting that there is a black heaven or hell. The colour divide is therefore extended beyond the realm of mortal life.

Angels are also alluded to. Before coming to the forest Agnes Ndiritu’s image of Kimathi had been of “a man with a long sword going around the country like an angel of death (128)”. The allusion is to the angels of death in the Bible that God sent to chastise those whom had transgressed his law. When again Agnes is spared death by a black ‘askari’ who instead shoots his white master and sets her free, she wonders who this soldier is and concludes that “may be he was an angel (128).” Kimathi replies that, yes. “There are many angels working for us. And many of their names will never be known (128).”

Biblical allusions are also used to highlight the leadership split within the Movement. General Mathenge who has been out manoeuvred by Kimathi in their struggle for supremacy warns Kimathi of the mistake he is making using Biblical characters.

Please remember about David and Saul. Also remember about Moses when he was taking the Israelites from Egypt. After thinking about Moses, think about yourself. Know what made Moses make a mistake and what makes you do the same (198).”

Mathenge therefore views Kimathi’s manoeuvres against him in the same light as the manoeuvres of David against King Saul in the Bible. He also indirectly acknowledges Kimathi’s supremacy over him by equating him with the Biblical Moses.
Kimathi’s anxiety with General Mathenge’s Kenya Riigi parliament negotiations with the government is also brought out through a Biblical allusion. His concern is that, being uneducated, the members might “fall into a Government trap, and be led like sheep without a shepherd out of the forest into captivity worse than before (227).” He quotes the words of Prophet Joel in the Bible to highlight the imminent danger.

Multitudes, multitudes,
In the valley of decision!
For the day of the Lord is near
In the valley of decision
The sun and the moon are darkened,
And the stars withdraw their shining (227).

He is however secretly fearful that the Government might grant Mathenge and his faction freedom leading to his (Kimathi’s) faction losing everything. This anxiety is captured yet again, in an allusion to the Bible. “They were in sight of the promised land, but on the wrong side of the river Jordan (283).”

As everything seems to go awry, Kimathi’s sense of betrayal is brought out through yet another allusion to the Bible”. Kimathi, with his party of about fifty, moved to a secret place, not knowing who might betray him like Jesus had been betrayed by Judas with a kiss (286).” As the hunt for him intensifies, his sense of despondency is aptly captured by a quotation from the book of Psalms.

“We do not see our signs;
There is no longer any prophet,
And there is none among us who knows how long
How long, O God, is the foe to scoff?
Is the enemy to revile your name forever?
Why dost thou hold back thy hand.
Why dost thou keep they right hand in they bosom (305)?"

Kimathi equates his situation, towards the end, with that of the Biblical David; and like David in the wilderness hiding from his enemies, he makes God the centre of his life and prays constantly. This sense of despondency is again brought out when Kimathi refers to those who have deserted him and the cause. “Now they are all gone, each one of them doing his best to betray and deny me. As many of you will soon do when your time comes (307).” The allusion here is to the trials of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane before his crucifixion. Kimathi equates his moment of capture with the crucifixion of Jesus. The allusion is extended, since Kimathi like Jesus, believes he will die because of his love for his people.

What had his love for his people brought except death? His crime was that he loved his people and his land. So no more talk of love. Love was a crime punishable by death. And like Jesus he would die. For loving too much (325).

The struggle for freedom though political in nature, acquires religious overtones, thus the aptness of the Biblical allusions as an aspect of style.

The other major use of figurative language in Kahiga’s Dedan Kimathi is manifested by the use of metaphors, similes and personification. Our principal concern is to investigate how the author has used these figures of speech to enhance style and to
capture the historical realities espoused in the text. Kahiga’s *Dedan Kimathi* is indeed rich in its use of the foregoing figures of speech.

Love affairs and liaisons are for instance expressed in very rich imagery. When we first encounter General Kabuku, he is in bed, “being warmed by a young girl called Waciuma (2).” This suggests the cold conditions pertaining in the forest, and hence the need to be ‘warmed’. This fact is confirmed by General Kabuku in another figure of speech while conversing with Kimathi. “That one is called Waciuma, Marshal, and she looks after me and keeps me from the cold of this forest (9).” General Kabuku extends the services of one of his female fighters, Agnes, to Kimathi “to look after you and see to all your needs (9)”. This euphemism connotes the act of love-making. This process is two way as illustrated by General Kabuku and another of his mistresses; “he clasped his mistress tightly, giving and receiving warmth (111).” These liaisons do blossom into real love occasionally, as it happens in Kabuku’s case. “Wangeci loved him; and her pains had been slowly rewarded because some of the ice in Kabuku’s soul had thawed for her (112).”

The healing power of love amidst the hazards of war is also brought out through figurative language, as is the case with Agnes Ndiritu when she is recuperating in a cave under the cave of one Baranaba, who becomes her lover.

She had now fully regained her strength, nourished by honey and meat and also wild fruits and wild caresses, and there was a fresh tingle in her nerves and a light in her eyes. She learnt to enjoy peace while it lasted, drinking deep from a pool of love that could never be so placid in peace time (117).
The actual act of love-making is also expressed metaphorically. Agnes Ndiritu, though General Kabuku’s mistress, falls in love with Brigadier Mugane who is on a visit to their camp, and spends the night with him. The ‘deliciousness’ of the moment is captured in the metaphor, “They hardly slept that night for the water was too sweet to waste (226).” This suggests the transient nature of the fortunes of war. Mugane feels enriched and grateful for “the tender union against a back-drop of violence (226).” He feels that, “She would forever be one of the milestones in his life, like a jewel embedded in the hot merciless sands of war (227).” The metaphors and the simile thus capture the tender moments and the tender side of this brutal war. They convey the indestructible of nature of love even in the harshest of circumstances. These moments make up for the misery of living in the cold forest, with the fear of death and the long empty days.

These liaisons do at times lead to the birth of children in the forest. General Kabuku and Agnes Ndiritu, do have a son together.

Since Kabuku had seen his child, he had become very much attached to it and to Agnes. A certain gate he had closed in his heart was opened and through it, love surged towards the woman and his child (289).

The birth of a son is not only a symbol of hope amid the destructiveness of war, but also serves as a tonic of love to a heart inured to the cruelty of war, such as General Kabuku’s is. In this way his belief in humanity is redeemed.

The anger of the Mau Mau fighters towards the enemy is also captured by various figures of speech. Anger is not hard to develop because of the horrifying things that
are going on in the Kikuyu reserves. Houses are being demolished, and the people are herded together into fortified villages where homeguards are the overloads, beating, raping and robbing them. Farms are deserted and famine sets in. The situation is summed up in one striking metaphor: "It was a simmering cauldron of torture, famine, sickness and depression (163)." This creates the image of hell in the reader's mind. The trauma of the populace is observed by Theuri on a visit to his home. "The war had shaken the people, even the strongest ones, and robbed them of fire and spirit (165)."

General Kabuku is angry of the fact that he has lost ten men and four rifles in a recent engagement with the colonial forces. The metaphor, "The fire was smouldering inside him (3)" vividly portrays his feeling of anger towards the enemy. The destruction and savagery that this feeling of anger engenders in the Mau Mau fighters is captured by a metaphor on death.

Leading about a hundred men, he would swoop from the forested mountain on yet another errand of destruction that would leave dismembered bodies of sheep and men grotesquely scattered under the devilish light of burning houses and animal pens (110). The metaphor 'devilish light' underlines the sheer savagery of the attack.

General Kago does not also allow any other emotion to guide his army. Anger is the guiding and principal emotion of his fighters and they are mercilessly cruel. Theuri, who has been attached to General Kago's army by Kimathi comes to understand the ugly truth about this side of the human spirit and metaphorically explains it.

56
Theuri learnt that cruelty, hatred, bitterness and endurance are all built in layers, and that one needs a state of war to realize how very deep those layers go in the bottomless pit of cruelty and suffering (148).

Having gone deep enough and touched those depths Theuri comes to understand why death is necessary even vital, for it is the only release according to him from the dehumanizing experience. Within a week Theuri feels part and parcel of Kago’s army since he has participated in the cruelties of his army and he is now ‘soaked in blood’. (148). The metaphor again emphasises the savage nature of the war. The desolate state into which the country has sunk into is also captured by the personification of death.

Yes, there was the same beautiful sunshine, same green valleys and blue hills, but death was straddled upon it now with a smoking gun (149).

This desolation is further heightened by the personification of the ‘country’. “The country was bleeding, bleeding profusely (149).” Thus creating an image of life slowly ebbing away in the reader’s mind.

The colonial forces brutality is also brought out by figures of speech. captured Mau Mau recruits are ordered to line up and are summarily shot. The machine gun fire is metaphorically described as a ‘murderous arc (158)’ and their death is captured in a metaphor of blood. “Their oathed blood mingled and trickled down into Kayahwe river (158).” The whimpers of the sole survivor of this particular massacre are “a haunting sound as a spul in hell, weeping for all the dead (159)” bringing home to the reader more forcefully the ghastly nature of the massacre. The miracle of his survival is expressed by the metaphor, “the awful silence told him that he alone was safe on
the other side of the river of death (159).” Kago’s army inflicts the same cruelties on the homeguards, as is the case when they capture one of their posts. General Kago burns them alive and their pain is metaphorically captured.

He lit the grass-thatched roof of the house. Those inside saw the fire and began howling. It was the cries of thirty souls in hell (162).

The fact that the forest is relatively safe for the Mau Mau fighters is expressed by the simile, “Looking for us is like looking for a bead in the grass (39).” This highlights the fact that the forest provides excellent fighting cover for the Mau Mau fighters. General Kabuku tells Kimathi that; “I’m an old hand in this forest (146)” meaning that he knows his way around and so he has an upper hand over the enemy when it comes to fighting in the forest. Kimathi who has little faith in Kabuku’s fighting abilities expresses it by way of a simile. “If you have lost your faith you are like salt that has lost its flavour (59).” He seeks to restore General Kabuku’s faith by sending him to the west of the Aberdares, where he can at least raid the enemy in the shape of the settler; rather than continue draining resources from the African reserves with nothing much to show for it.

The intensity of war is further suggested by the metaphorical saying “waiting for the weather to clear (87).” Because of General Kago’s repeatedly daring raids on various government posts, the whole of the Fort Hall area is crawling with all sorts of Government forces and the fighting is always hot and fierce with a considerable number of casualties on both sides. Theuri who has been ordered to join General Kago’s army by Kimathi has literally to wait for the fighting to abate to be able to reach him. This simile “the bullets were like a hail-storm (157)” also alludes to the
intensity of the fighting as does the metaphor, “while the bullets danced their death catch all (167).” This helps the reader to visualize how hot the battle could get. The pain of being shot and the last moments of life is expressed by a metaphor. Bullets are metaphorically referred to as ‘charcoal’ creating in the reader the image of hot burning charcoal and the agony it could cause. Sergeant kana Kehoti and is one such soldier whose processes of dying illustrates the point as he poignantly urges Agnes to move on.

I’m right. But feeling weak. Feeling so much pain. There’s a piece of charcoal burning inside the wound. A piece of hot iron. Oh, Agnes, leave me here. Run on and save yourself (122).

His death is metaphorically portrayed as one of the many sacrifices for freedom. “The blood of a brother trickling into the great red river of freedom blood (123).” By using the word river the metaphor gives the reader an idea of the great numbers of lives lost in this struggle. Due to the great pain he is, death is seen as a welcome release for kana Kehoti. “He was almost gone now suspended halfway through the pain of this bitter world and the peace beyond (123).” The metaphor, “one more soul succumbing to voracious death night (123),” portrays death as insatiable, always demanding for more lives. This again alludes to the great loss of lives occasioned by the struggle.

His army being largely decimated by casualties and desertions and with very few rifles; General Kabuku is in no position to make his move west as he has been ordered to. He appeals for support from his erstwhile captain now ‘General’ Thuo, a leader of one of the breakaway units. He appeals to his sense of kinship by use of a figure of speech.
Remember that you and I come from Othaya and that 'your mother and my wife borrow salt from each other' (69).

The simile serves to emphasise Kabuku’s dire straits and his desperate need for reinforcements. It exposes his poor leadership and much more important, - the severe shortage of arms within the Mau Mau Movement.

General Thuo on his part is suspicious of the intentions of his former General and declines to go to Kabuku’s camp. On receiving the message he retorts: “Go to the den of the lion? (70).” This metaphor serves to illustrate the mistrust that eventually leads to the disintegration of the Mau Mau fighting forces.

The intensity of the bombing campaign by the colonial forces is captured by the use of metaphors. It has been so intense that General Thuo remarks; “I thought the whole mountain would go up (72).” The imminence of death is expressed by its personification. “Death has come! (72).” The bombing is referred to as “the bird started laying her eggs (72).” The act of bombing is made so vivid by making the reader visualize the plane as a huge malevolent bird, laying murderous eggs, (bombs).

The intensity of the war is furthermore suggested by the metaphorical saying “waiting for the weather to clear (87).” Because of General Kago’s repeatedly daring raids on various Government posts, the whole of Fort Hall area is crawling with all sorts of Government forces and the fighting is always hot and fierce with a considerable number of casualties on both sides. Theuri who has been ordered to join General Kago’s army by
Kimathi has literally to wait for the fighting to abate to be able to reach him. The simile “the bullets were like a hail-storm (157)” also alludes to the intensity of the fighting; as does the metaphor, “while the bullets danced their death catch all (167).” This helps the reader to visualize how hot the battle could get. The pain of being shot and the last moments of life is expressed by a metaphor. Bullets are metaphorically referred to as ‘charcoal’ creating in the reader’s mind the image of hot burning charcoal and the agony it could cause. Sergeant Kana Kehoti is one such soldier whose process of dying illustrates the point as he poignantly urges Agnes to move on after he is shot.

I’m all right. But feeling weak. Feeling so much pain. There’s a piece of charcoal burning inside the wound. A piece of hot iron. Oh, Agnes, leave me here. Run on and save yourself (122).

His death is metaphorically portrayed as one of the many sacrifices for freedom. “The blood of a brother trickling into the great red river of freedom blood (123).” By using the word ‘river’ the metaphor gives the reader an idea of the great numbers of lives lost in this struggle. Due to the great pain he is in, death is seen as a welcome release for Kana Kehoti. “He was almost gone now suspended halfway through the pain of this bitter world and the peace beyond (123).” The metaphor, “one more soul succumbing to voracious death night (123)” portrays death as insatiable, always demanding more lives. This again alludes to the great loss of lives occasioned by the struggle.

Collaborators with the colonial Government, such as the home guards are referred to by use of a negative metaphor, “the barren ones of the land (75).” The details of the
atrocities that they perpetrate on the populace, especially the raping of women together with the white ‘johnnies’, are related to General Kabuku when he goes to collect provisions from the Reserve for his journey West. Bareness in Gikuyu culture is considered a curse, and the metaphor captures the unproductive and harmful effect of their unpatriotic activities on the freedom struggle. The term ‘barren’ expresses the extreme revulsion they are held in, and further suggests their future extinction due to (bareness) as a class.

A different class of collaborators is that which pretends to be part of the struggle but secretly serves the colonial masters. The members of this group belong to the “musical society (127)” which takes the “musical oath (118),” by which the government makes the traitors swear to betray the leaders of the Movement. These two related metaphors aptly capture their role as double agents. The metaphor “musical” explains the fact that they change roles frequently, at times appearing to serve the Movement though the colonialists are ultimately their true masters. The beautiful Kabui, who is executed by Baranaba, is one such spy.

The divisions existing within the Movement are again captured through various figures of speech. The contentious issue of the election of members of the Mau Mau parliament which some leaders feel should be postponed since some of the important players are absent is captured by the Gikuyu saying; “A tree cannot fall on a person who is not near. (133).” This literally translates to the fact that if a tree was to fall it would only hurt or kill those present and hence the argument that the elections should go on without those leaders who have absented themselves.
Marshal Kimathi’s deftness in consolidating his power through this parliament at the expense of General Mathenge is captured by the metaphor; “Dedan Kimathi had played his cards so cleverly (143).” General Mathenge’s awareness of the advantages of literacy is expressed by the saying, “The pen is mightier than the arrow (147).” He knows the importance of education and the fact that his being illiterate is his biggest disadvantage in the cold war between him and Kimathi.

The contempt that the illiterate Mau Mau leaders feel for their educated compatriots is captured by the euphemism “tie-tie (133),” which is a reference to the white collar workers who feel they have too much to lose if they identify with the Movement. But General Mathenge lacks the skills to lead intelligently a serious revolt like Mau Mau, and Kimathi expresses the need to move on in a metaphor. “The mills would not stop grinding just to accommodate Stanley Mathenge Mirugi and his incompetence. (174).” “As far as Kimathi is concerned, Mathenge would just have “to tow the line (175).”

General Mathenge’s antipathy towards Kimathi is evident in the sarcastic tone he employs in a letter to him. He begins the letter by saluting Kimathi sarcastically. “Oh are you well, lover of all my brother? (197).” ‘Lover of all’ is ironic because Mathenge knows he is his rival and the question of ‘loving each other’ is far from his mind. In the same letter he addresses him as, “you courageous chosen-of-God (197).” Sarcastically alluding to his supposed messianic mission.

The shortage of arms and the issue of ranks is highlighted by the use of sarcasm. One of General Kabuku’s fighters is upset that his gun is taken away and he is demoted
from the rank of R.S.M. to a corporal. He sarcastically wonders how he is expected to fight in a complaint to Marshal Kimathi. “When I came into this forest, I did not come to admire the leaves. Where I was before I came here, there were trees and leaves to admire (41).” To which General Kabuku retorts, “My rifles are not to be used as supports for tired bones (43).”

General Kabuku later finds himself, in a similar situation when one of the Komerera ‘Generals’, Thwariga, forcefully takes away three guns from his fighters and sarcastically taunts him, “What do you think guns are for, Kabuku? Decoration? (81).”

General Kabuku is a dandy, and though in the forest, with supposedly little time to dress smartly; he does make the effort. He sarcastically tells Brigadier Mugane Kago that; “Just because we are here in the bush does not mean that we must go around in rags that reveal our circumcision (204).” To drive his point home he illustrates it by comparing two fighters from his battalion.

Whenever we attack a white man’s house I tell my men; get all the clothes’. That young man over there you can see he is smart. He’s from my Battalion, Rwada number one. The one next to him is in skins because he is foolish. Whenever we attack a farm, he heads for the granary and eats the wheat raw (204).

This not only reveals the contempt in which he holds some of his fighters and what he thinks of their calibre but also reveals him as a vain dandy.
Sarcasm is also used to reveal General Kabuku’s growing irritability with the negotiations between the colonial Government and General Mathenge’s Kenya Riigi parliament. He and his colleagues sense that the Government is trying to trick them out of the forest and disarm them without giving them Freedom. When Agnes asks him how the talks are progressing and whether they have agreed on the date of Freedom, General Kabuku sarcastically retorts: “Do you think Freedom is like getting a bride? We are not discussing bride price. What’s your hurry (273)?”

In a subsequent meeting between the two parties General Kibati, one of the Mau Mau oath administrators, prepares some oathing ingredients and pours them on the slaughtered goat they are to share, uttering a Mau Mau oath. Kabuku is tickled by the fact that Henderson and company take the oath unwittingly and are now on their side or should be. But Agnes who supports Kimathi’s faction rather than Mathenge’s retorts. “And now that you are all on one side, when can we expect our Freedom (274)?”

After the death of General Stanley Mathenge, Kabuku is demoralised. His dream of Freedom receives the final shattering blow he no longer sees the need to continue being in the forest. Agnes sarcastically mocks him by asking him “was it Stanley who brought you here? (293).” The sarcasm is emphasized when Agnes repeats the question with minor variations. Did Stanley take you by the hand and bring you here (293)?” Kabuku is incensed by the insulting tone of her voice, but she persists. “Was it Stanley who told you to fight and never surrender (293)?” It is obvious he has lost the will to fight but Agnes is determined to stick it out to the end.
Ironically, Agnes had earlier thought of surrendering due to her being pregnant but Kimathi sarcastically rebukes her. “What do you expect me to say? Thank you very much see you on independence Day (262)?” Kimathi does not rebuke her because he is unsympathetic of her condition, but because she is General Kabuku’s mistress. Sarcasm therefore is used to highlight some of the underlying tensions within the Mau Mau Movement.

The use of local register also enhances the style of Dedan Kimathi. Concepts that cannot be adequately expressed in English are rendered through Gikuyu and sometimes Swahili words therefore capturing the essence and meaning of what is being referred to much more concisely. One of the weapons the fighters use is a sword known in Kiswahili as ‘Simi’. The word ‘Simi’ alerts the reader that the sword is not single edged but double edged and there is the further suggestion that it is razor sharp, as such swords are wont to be. The breakaway pseudo-gangs are referred to as ‘Komerera’ (3) literally meaning to crouch’. The name is therefore suggestive of their behaviour, since as breakaway gangs who are hunted both by the colonial forces and the Mau Mau armies, they have to literally ‘crouch’, to avoid detection.

They were wild men, very quick on the trigger and Kabuku knew that it was such men who had given Mau Mau a bad name in the reserves for they shot at anything and anybody. They robbed even Mau Mau supporters. They were not really in the war. They were survivors, fugitives from their own leaders, the British and even God. A bunch of robbers and murderers (70).

‘Kiraiku’ (12) is a hand rolled cigarette of the lowest quality tobacco. It suggests the hardships that the fighters have to put up with and since they cannot afford better
quality cigarettes they have to make do with this type of tobacco which is rolled using newspaper and is particularly acrid.

The freedom fighters are referred to as ‘Itungati’ (147) in the plural and ‘gitungati’ (60) in the singular. This translates into ‘those who serve’. The name therefore adequately describes their function – which is to serve the people and the nation by fighting for freedom. This gives the reader a deeper understanding of the role of the fighters, than if they had been simply referred to as ‘fighters’, a word which does not suggest their ‘serving’ role.

The freedom fighters camps are known as ‘mbuci’ (70) which is the Gikuyu version of the word ‘bush’. In this case the word refers to a unit of fighters; but the word also literally denotes the fact that the camps are in a bush – where they hide, and hence its appropriateness.

The fighters refer to their mistresses in the forest as ‘Kabatuni’ (171) ‘Batuni’ is the Gikuyu version of the word Platoon. ‘Kabatuni’ is the diminutive for ‘Batuni’. Whereas the latter word would refer to one belonging to a platoon or being the leader of one, the dimunitive version views the mistress as the possession of her lover, his private ‘platoon’.

Conversely, those that fight for the colonial forces are referred to in a derogatory fashion. The homeguards are for instance referred to as ‘Kenya Ng’ombe’ (66). ‘Ng’ombe’ is the Swahili word for ‘cow’. In this instance the reference to the
homeguards as ‘cows’ is meant to be derogatory since they are viewed by the Movement as docile as cows who follow their colonial masters blindly.

The soldiers of the Kings African Rifles are referred to as ‘askaris’ Swahili for ‘soldiers’ to differentiate them from the white soldiers and the Mau Mau fighters. When Agnes is briefly captured she identifies her captors as “A white man and four askaris (120).” The word has a derogatory connotation here since Agnes refuses to recognize the black askaris as soldiers and thinks of them as “four hunting dogs with their master (120).” The white soldier who is their leader is referred to as ‘bwana (121)’ Swahili for master, thus underscoring the master servant relationship between the white and black soldiers.

Kahiga also uses the local register to express the urgency of some situations such as the imminence of death. When the colonial forces drop their bombs, the danger is expressed by the words ‘Ni rii!’ (72) Meaning ‘it is now!’ These words capture the seriousness of the situation much more vividly than their English translation.

The warriors’ oath is referred to as “Muma wa Ngero”. This translates to ‘the oath of atrocities’. The meaning is therefore not very well captured by the translation since the correct approximation would be ‘the fighters’ oath’. This oath is different from the oath of allegiance to the Movement since it is specifically taken by those volunteering for combat duty. The word ‘Ngero’ however suggests that the fighters are prepared to commit any atrocities in the cause of freedom.
A purification ceremony is carried out before the opening of the Kenyalekalo Memorial hall using a concoction known as ‘githambio’ (206) which translates to “cleanser”. This concoction is a mixture of millet flour mixed with water and kept overnight to ferment. It is used in religious ceremonies to purify and bless the meeting place as well as those taking part in the meeting. No translation would adequately capture the meaning of the word and the essence of the ceremony.

General Mathenge’s parliament is known as the Kenya League, but the fighters call it by its Gikuyu name ‘Riigi’. ‘Riigi’ is the borrowed version of the word League. General Mathenge’s parliament is dominated by the illiterate fighters and this fact is emphasized by their Africanizing of the word ‘League’ to ‘Riigi’ which probably points to their inability to pronounce the anglicized version of the word. Their handicap is therefore vividly brought out for the reader.

The symbols of a Kikuyu elder are also rendered in the local registrar. ‘Muthegi’, (249) is a walking staff which symbolizes authority, ‘mutathi’ are green leaves symbolizing wisdom. And ‘Ngwaro’ are wet skin bracelets also symbolizing authority. No English translation would adequately capture their meaning and the symbolism behind them.

Kahiga also uses the Gikuyu name of God ‘Ngai’ (290) suggesting a dichotomy between the God of the Christians – and by extension the God of the white man and ‘Ngai’ the God of the Gikuyu people. This dichotomy emphasizes the fact that the fighters are praying for their victory from the hands of ‘Ngai’, the God of the black people as opposed to the God of the Christians.
To emphasize the sacredness of the fig tree in Gikuyu mythology, Kahiga refers to it by its Gikuyu name ‘Mugumo’ (308). The nature of its sacredness would be lost on the reader if it was simply referred to as the fig tree. One of the fighters, Theuri, “wondered what power it had, why his ancestors had for generations believed that the Mugumo was Ngai’s holy tree (309).”

From the foregoing analysis we have established that Kahiga has taken advantage of various figures of speech to make the story captivating. He has employed metaphors, similes, personification and symbolic allusion to embellish his story. These stylistic choices have a profound aesthetic effect on Dedan Kimathi.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE EPISTOLARY MODE

Style in a given piece of literary work can be said to encompass all the devices that contribute to the beauty and effectiveness, and hence the success of a piece of art. These devices include language, structure, description, symbolism and mode of writing. In this chapter we examine the letter, diary and report form to determine how it enhances style. The epistolary mode inherently stresses communication and process, major thematic concerns of the novel, and it accentuates a reliance on a variety of self-conscious narrators who are not easily subject to interrogation by one another nor the reader.

Dedan Kimathi is not written in a letterform but Kahiga does use letters written by Kimathi to various people; and other letters written to him by others. He also uses reports and diaries written by Kimathi and other characters. The letterform affords the writer the opportunity for direct communication. Okeng’o Matiang’i in his PhD thesis asserts that “A letter, both in its abstract form the way we know it and in its artistic use... gives the writer a complete leeway to bring out with candidness whatever she pleases because privacy is guaranteed (65).” Kahiga’s use of letters in Dedan Kimathi is not so much an aspect of style, but rather seems to be informed by his desire to authenticate his claim that his is the ‘real’ portrayal of Kimathi. “Kimathi’s documents, some never published before provide a new insight into the man and the movement he led (cover page).” But it is our intention to treat these letters as an aspect of style by investigating how this form contributes to the structure of the novel, how the letters fit into the narration; and how the shifting points of view enhance style.
This study also adopts a New Historicism approach since Dedan Kimathi is a historical figure. According to Davis and Schleifer in their Contemporary Literary Criticism; one of the goals the historical approach to literary criticism seeks to accomplish is to identify “a text’s references to history – specific allusions to actual people, political events, economic developments ... (369).” The letters, diaries and reports used by the author in *Dedan Kimathi* confirm the foregoing for they refer to a specific era in Kenya’s history. New historicism attempts to situate literary works “within an historical matrix (374).” The letters reports and diaries give an important glimpse into the history of the struggle for freedom – the Mau Mau era.

To emphasise the role played by women in the struggle Kahiga uses letters written to them giving them instructions on things they are to do for the movement. The narration preceding the letters prepare the reader to expect them. Rather than summarize their contents, Kahiga presents them verbatim for the reader’s own inspection and first hand verification. “They were always short and concise, embracing large meaning in short phrases (14).” Kahiga selects those letters which highlight important events in the narration. One such event is the meeting called to elect a Kenya-wide council for the Movement which is revealed to the reader through Kimathi’s letter to Wangeci Ndiritu.

Dear Wangeci wife of Ndiritu

You and the women are invited to attend a meeting at Mwathe on the moorland [sic] on 16.8.53. The women should bring as much food as they can carry, for the food must last at least four days.

Greetings to all the women and girls, Dedan Kimathi.(15).
The letter serves to introduce the meeting to the reader and the role played by women in it and therefore dovetails into the narration. Communication in the forest between the various fighting units is done through letters. Letters are part of the plot and further its progression. The first glimpse of the organization and structure of the Mau Mau army is indeed first afforded the reader through the epistolary mode when Kimathi invites armies for a meeting through writing letters to them. The purpose of the meeting will be elect a Kenya-wide council and to bring our scattered forces together. We shall issue ranks and plan raids (18)."

The Movement’s view on traitors and their handling is also brought out through the letter form. The letters are in the form of warnings. They are juxtaposed with the narration on brutalities inflicted on the people by the traitors and the subsequent action taken against them. One such letter is written by Kimathi to Headman Kabocha.

"Headman Kabocha,

I know what you are doing to my people. I know all the places you go to and all the harm you are doing to your own black people ... (20)."

The letter form is also used to shift the point of view from the activities of the traitors to the punishment meted out to them; such as the letter to one Wangero Mbugi.

Wangero son of Mbugi,

Because of your many crimes against our people you have been tried in our court and this is the sentence: (i) You have been found guilty and are ordered to pay within twenty-four hours of this notice the sum of Shillings 5000/= cash
and further ordered to stop your activities against your African Government ...
(21-22).

The letter fits into the narrative mode of the text by the narration after it of the actions
taken against both Headman Kabocha and Wangero Mbugi for failing to comply with
the demands of the movement.

Wangero Mbugi was cut up to pieces one night he and his wife. Headman
Kabocha and many of his homeguards died when a group of Mau Mau, led by
a young Major called Gaitho s/o Wang'ombe attacked the post (22).

Kimathi’s attempts to attract international support is also brought out through the
epistolary mode. To more successfully merge Kimathi’s letter to George Malenkov of
Moscow press, into the narrative mode the author interrupts it with an internal
monologue in which Kimathi reminiscences on Agnes Ndiritu, a girl with whom he
has just spent the night with; and then switches the point of view back to the letter.

I Field-Marshal Dedan Kimathi, the top leader of the Land Freedom Army and
the President of the Kenya African Defence Council hereby notify you... (54)

The focus then switches to his thoughts on Agnes “She was one of those women who
could be very useful in a well organised camp. But she was so quiet and charming you
wouldn’t guess how good she was. And she had given him a memorable time (54).”
This contrasting of the apparently frivolous in narrative form and the serious in
epistolary form blends the latter into the structure of the text by portraying Kimathi both as a serious political leader and an ordinary man with ordinary desires and needs.

The same letter (to Malenkov) outlines the expropriation of African wealth by the colonial authorities. "African wealth e.g. cattle, sheep, goats and money, etc, have all been taken away and shared among the British settlers (55)." The land hunger and the banning of political parties is further cited in the letter as the cause to the coming into being of the movement, though Kimathi claims not to know the meaning of the term Mau Mau. To quote the letter again.

Later in 1945, after the second world war, we formed another political body in the name of KENYA AFRICAN UNION which was proscribed and the leaders exiled without any cause. When we rebelled we were given the nickname of Mau Mau of which no one knows the meaning (55).

The letter ends with an appeal for help.

The letter form is also used to reveal Kimathi's superstitious nature and belief in astrologers. He frequently writes to Indian astrologers both in Kenya and in India to consult on his future by having his fortune told. This is one of the contradictory strands that go into the making of his personality and spiritual constitution. One such letter he writes to S.P. Maharaj reads,

I send you herewith my fingerprints to assist you in solving my difficulties and fortunes. As I explained in my other letter, the top of the ring finger was cut off on 11.2.50.

The time I began writing this letter is 17 minutes past 8.00 a.m. My age is approximately 33 years. I enclose herewith shs. 20 in money orders.
Looking forward to hearing from you,

Yours truly,

D.K. Matemo.

P.O. Box 168, Nyeri, Kenya (84).”

The astrologers did not suspect the true identity of their correspondent whose fortune they were telling. Kimathi besides has many books of the fortune telling kind which he also frequently consults when he wants to know the future or the meaning of a dream (84).”

Some of the letters are only alluded to rather than being reproduced verbatim, but the contents are expressed in the narrative form. One such letter is a document drafted to the colonial government on Dedan Kimathi’s conditions for holding negotiations. The core of these conditions is that “the freedom fighters would never come out of the forest until Kenya was granted full independence, and all the stolen land returned to the Africans (171-172);” Kimathi however follows up this document with a letter of his own to “drive the point home (172).”

This action is prompted by other alluded to letters written by General China-who has been captured by the colonial forces – at their behest to fifteen other leaders in the forest to begins negotiations. Kimathi correctly sees the letters as a ploy by the colonial authorities to “effect mass surrender from Mau Mau troops (171).” The letters alluded to here are therefore used to further the plot and show at what point the colonial authorities begin undermining Mau Mau troop morale. General China has
already been won over, his “views were that negotiations should be started for there
might not be another chance (171)”

The letter form also highlights against the tensions, divisions and power struggles that
are eventually successfully exploited by the colonialists to defeat Mau Mau. General
Mathenge hails form Othaya division and has the sympathies of the people there. The
secretary to the movement there, writes to Kimathi “delicately asking him why there
seemed to be some friction between him and Stanley Mathenge, or Kirema-Thahu.
“Why this ill-feeling between you, and why aren’t you giving Kirema-Thahu any
promotion (169)?” There is the feeling that Othaya people are being sidelined
Kimathi’s letter of reply is conciliatory and reveals him to be a nationalist. “Why do
we keep on talking about locations, divisions and districts? Are they not all part of
Kenya (176)?”

Mathenge’s letter to Kimathi reveals this sense of grievance and the tacit
acknowledgement that Kimathi is the overall leader of the Mau Mau army.
To quote part of the letter:

... Please remember about David and Saul. Also remember about Moses
when he was taking the Israelites from Egypt. After thinking about Moses,
think about yourself. Know what made Moses make a mistake and what
makes you do the same … (198)

Thus Mathenge views himself as the Biblical King Saul whose throne is usurped by
David. His sense of insecurity and by extension that of the other illiterate fighters is
revealed by the single sentence in the letter, “If I were clever, I would tell you a lot,
but now I cannot as I have no knowledge, and I am so little (198).” ‘I am so little’ is in fact a direct translation for the Gikuyu language, a translation that would be typical with the unschooled, which Mathenge is. Further on in his letter he writes “We are working for the tribe, thinking with our hearts (198).” The operative phrase here is “thinking with our hearts” rather than their heads, which is a preserve for the educated. The epistolary mode captures the inferiority complex suffered by the illiterate fighters and from a historical point of view highlights the genesis of the fatal split within the Mau Mau army.

It is through the epistolary mode that we also see how promotions are given in the Mau Mau army. Captain Theuri who has been serving under the late General Kago is promoted to the rank of major for his prowess in battle. The promotion is based on a letter from one General Ihuura who praises Theuri’s efforts to Kimathi. Kimathi in turn writes to Theuri a letter of commendation and promotion. It would appear then, that promotions in the Mau Mau army are not conferred verbally but are recorded and those being promoted informed in writing. Thus Kimathi’s letter to Theuri reads:

This is to inform you that, because of your good work in the Kenya Levellation, Army, you have been promoted to the rank of Major. A token prize fo twenty shillings is enclosed, pending the hour when our struggle will be over and every soldier will get his just reward.

Marshal D. Kimathi (181).

This invalidates the feeling among sections of the army that promotions are based on where one comes from, rather than on merit.
Supplies needed by the fighters in the forest are also procured through the agency of letters. There is in place an elaborate system of letter boxes scattered in the forest and one Colonel Wamugunda acts as postmaster and is entrusted with the work of picking up telegrams and parcels and passing them on to the forest. The supplies range from medicine, salt, books, writing pads, blankets, maize flour, coffee, sugar and the most important – ammunition. It is indeed through one of his letters to an agent in Nyeri town called Maingi that he spells out the duties of those coordinating the activities of the Movement outside the forest. "I mentioned seven duties, namely, care for orphans and widows, trouble of nakedness and food, asking for subscriptions and our poll tax, fighting against our enemies, daily prayers and collecting all our sheep and lambs together (127)."

Letters in the text are therefore not only used as a stylistic feature but also as a means of furthering the plot and are the very lifeline of the Mau Mau army. The discovery of the letterboxes by the colonial authorities through the treachery of the pseudo-gangs is a fatal blow to the Mau Mau, since it cuts off communication with the outside world and hampers the provision of vital supplies, leading to its eventual defeat.

There exists many different points of view on who or what Kimathi really is; but his letter to his teacher reveals what he thinks of himself, and his mission in life. To begin with, he appropriates to himself a messianic role; he writes of himself thus, "I am the second Jesus Christ, to save my dear Africans from everlasting slavery and retrieve them from their land hunger (222)." He re-affirms the historical fact that the Mau Mau struggle is primarily a struggle for the restitution of African lands; that the overcrowding in the African reserves was a major factor in the armed conflict. He
uses a metaphor to express his messianic mission; ‘I am a young Kenyan star. I will shine in the day time, moonlit nights and in darkness also (222).’ In yet another letter to one Bwana Muturi 5/5 an agent in Nyeri town he writes of himself. “Remember I am the light of Kenya and the torch in my life-blood is for setting our people free from slavery (52).” He uses a simile to express himself on what he sees as the role modelling responsibility of teachers. “You all stand as lighted candles (222).” The letter again brings to light the fact that he views the struggle as Pan-African in nature, he writes. “Therefore let he who has eyes see for Kenya, hear for Kenya, go for Kenya, but mostly for Africa (223).” He states that “We are not fighting for a lasting hatred, but creating a true and real brotherhood between white and black ... (223).” Kimathi therefore does not view himself as a racist.

The epistolary mode also poignantly captures Kimathi’s last moments and re-affirms his religious nature when in trouble. He writes a final letter to a white Catholic Priest, Father Marino. “He said he was very happy, preparing for heaven (337).”

Closely tied with the letters are the Mau Mau war records, personal diaries and various reports written by Kimathi and the Generals of the different fighting units. Kimathi is very insistent on the importance of keeping records. The charter he issues to his army reveals its ideological principles and copies of it are sent all over the world to sensitize the international community on the aims of the Mau Mau armed struggle. The charter rejects colonialisation in Kenya, demands an African government, rejects exploitation of Africans by whites, among many other demands.
The records, reports and diaries give a day to day account of the war - the losses, the wins, the hardships involved and the enormous sacrifice of the combatant units. This gives the reader a sense of participating in history by making him an eyewitness to the daily events recorded in this form. The records are an important window to the state of the army and troop morale. Kimathi, is for example, very disappointed with General Kabuku’s records whose camp he is inspecting. "They threw light on how this army tried to survive from day to day, but there was no record of a raid on a Government post (51).” The records are therefore a sub-plot which authenticate the events of the main narrative by giving the reader the finer details of specific happenings that would ordinarily encumber the main flow of events with unnecessary baggage. An example is a typical entry which while not crucial to the plot, nevertheless gives us a glimpse into the maintenance of discipline among the troops. According to General Kabuku’s records again:

The following boys were punished by General Yakubu Kabuku for deserting sentry duty on 17.10.53.

Corporal Kamau s/o Mwangi 15 strokes of bamboo
Corporal Kihuni s/o Njau 15 strokes
RSM Mwathi s/o Gikandi 15 strokes

Note: We should always be alert for nobody knows the hour when the enemy might come (51).

It is through the diary form that Kimathi records his day to day movements, his observations, frustrations and his instructions to his commanders. His frustration with the officers is for instance brought out in this form. He writes “Many of our troubles, as I see it, are caused by officers’ selfishness and their stupidity. In this forest fools
are in the majority (11).” We get to know of the financial position of the movement through the same means. “Our income for October was only shs. 2197/=, the lowest in 1953, May (Shs. 9923.45) and August (shs. 6573.45) were our best months (11).” We also get to know that “an unmarried girl should pay shs. 3/50 for the oath (11).” And that “old men, old women and children will not be charged anything unless they wish to contribute anything … (11).”

Apart from Kimathi, a captain Theuri s/o Ndiritu also keeps a diary which also illuminates the split within the Mau Mau ranks. He records the second leaders meeting which Kimathi summons to select new leaders. Although many leaders turn up, the meeting is a failure since most of the important leaders such as Stanley Mathenge and Mbaria Kaniu do not.

Kimathi also notes this underlying tension in his diary when in a subsequent meeting of the opening of the Kenya Young Stars Memorial Hall he writes of General Kabuku, one of the illiterate Generals. “He was friendly, but I have many eyes and ears which tell me who my true friends are (126).” The proceedings at the meeting to elect a parliament which Kimathi notes in his diary from the minutes serves again to highlight the impending split between the literate and the illiterate factions and the alienating effect of education.

Kimbo: I agree, but I wonder if education should be a qualification. We know very well that this war is being fought mainly by those who had no chance to go to school. We know that most educated people are tie, tie licking the boots of Europeans, and not giving a thought to the struggle.
Dr. King’ori: That may be true, but there is not one country in the world where illiterates have been known to run a Government successfully. Education should be a qualification, otherwise we are heading to nowhere. (133).

We get to know that Kimathi keeps himself informed on world history by reading widely through one of his diary entries. He writes: “I was happy to find a book I had asked for – They way of the Dictators, which is about Mussolini, Hitler, Mustapha Kemal, Stalin, and Pilsudski. Dictators, Fascists, Socialists. Brigadier M.M. could not get Towards Indian Home Rule and 1001 Wonders of the Universe (124).” In the same diary the reader gets to know of the lack of arms “which seems to plague our army whenever I go (125).” General Kabuku reinforces this point in his letter to one of the leaders of a unit that had broken away from him, (Komerera) to support him with his rifles. He writes:

The thing is this, I need your rifles. I have to make a trip to the reserves to obtain a large supply of food for my journey to the Rift Valley. Yes, D.K. sent me there and I believe that he has sent many other people there. Shall I get your rifles or not … (69)?

Another self-styled Komerera General named Thwariga attempts to cheat General Kabuku that he has been sent by Kimathi to get some guns from him to raid a homeguard camp. Kabuku sees through his stratagem and Thwariga is forced to “borrow” them by force. This leads Kabuku to write an angry letter of denunciation to Kimathi, again underscoring the scarcity of arms in the Mau Mau army through the use of letters. Kabuku’s indignation is illustrated by the fact that he capitalizes the
number of guns taken away from him in his letter. "He took away THREE of my rifles by force, leaving my camp without adequate protection (83)." This shows how serious the scarcity of arms is if the loss of three guns can so irk Kabuku.

Though there is no evidence of material support for the Movement from foreign sources, Kimathi records in his diary the fact that he has received encouraging letters "from England from Mr. Fenner Blockway, the labour M.P. and Mr. Mbiyu Koinange (125)." The factors that ail the Kiambu Mau Mau battalions and the unpatriotic nature of the people of Kiambu is highlighted in a report to Kimathi. They rely on sorcery, their promotions are haphazard, jealous is rife among them and they hoard property. "When they collect subscriptions, they buy livestock for their own benefit (229)." In this selfish manner they undermine the Movement. The report identifies lack of leadership as the main problem afflicting the 5th Army. "Officers in Kiambu do not have the welfare of their soldiers at heart (230)." The populace in the villages is not any better either. "People in the reserves hide fire-arms and prevent soldiers from using them (230)." This highlights their unpatriotism.

Kimathi understands the importance of propaganda in bolstering troop morale, he does this by deprecating the might of the colonial forces. In his diary he notes that he tells his men, "although the Royal Air Force had cost the Kenya Government over a million pounds already, they had killed only about four of our fighters (£250,000 per head, and not even my head is worth that) (126)."
The British Colonial Government also employs the use of propaganda to undermine the morale of the Movement through leaflets dropped into the forest by aeroplanes. One such pamphlet reads:

GOVERNMENT PROMISE

THE KENYAN GOVERNMENT HAS OFFERED ALL THE FIGHTERS A CHANCE TO COME OUT OF THE FORESTS AND RETURN TO NORMAL PEACEFUL LIFE. HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR OF KENYA SIR EVYLYN BARING HAS GIVEN A GENERAL AMNESTY TO ALL PERSONS WHO HAVE COMMITTED CRIMES DURING THE EMERGENCY UP TO TODAY 18 TH JANUARY 1955. SAVE YOUR LIFE NOW!! SURRENDER WITH ALL YOUR FIGHTING WEAPONS AND YOU WILL NOT BE PROSECUTED. YOU WILL NOT BE DETAINED BUT RECEIVE MEDICAL TREATMENT, FOOD, CLOTHING AND GENERAL CARE.

Signed by: Sir Evelyn Baring,

His Excellency the Governor of Kenya,

Gen. Sir George Erskine,

Commander- in-chief, East Africa (236).

Although the pamphlet inadvertently acknowledges the fact that the country has been shaken by the Mau Mau war, Kimathi is justifiably worried that: “It will be very attractive to many of our men (237).” And correctly interprets the move as “another Government trap to disarm and defeat us (237).”
The Movement does also maintain a Death Register. This register contains a list of senior officers who have died. Kimathi asserts that "We like writing details about such people so that later generations may think about them and honour them (182)."

Apart from giving the bare details about their rank and place of origin, Kimathi also adds his own personal remarks about them. One such entry reads:

"HONOUR.

"BRIGADIER WILLIAM GATHITU WAITHAKA

Mr. Gathitu s/o Waithaka who was a first class Brigadier in our Army deserves honour as a great leader who was skillful and had brains.

Mr. William Gathitu Waithaka proved his devotion to his people through his activities, love, tolerance, and friendship among his comrades.

Brigadier W.G. Waithaka’s instructions to many of our Battalions have been like light cast in darkness.

His memory should stay with us, especially Kenya Africans and also in the whole of Africa because the aim he was fighting for has spread to all corners of Africa.

Mr. W. G. was from Central Province.

| District  | - Nyeri |
| Location  | - Tetu |
| Sub-location | - Karaihu |
| Village   | - Gathanj |
| Clan      | - Muithirandu (183) |
The epistolary form is a significant feature of style in Dedan Kimathi, and is also used to further the plot. The epistles authenticate the author’s claim that his is the ‘real’ story, by providing back-up evidence as it were. From a historical point of view, the letters, reports diaries and records serve as the text’s reference to the history of the freedom struggle. The letters therefore enhance style and are not a mere intrusion into the general flow of events.

CONCLUSION
This study has been a stylistic analysis on how Kahiga has exploited various stylistic devices to recreate a historical event in Dedan Kimathi. It has been guided by the principle that in as much as Dedan Kimathi is a historical text, based on real events governing his life and times; although it sets out to render as closely as possible and in a documentary fashion, the essence of the man’s spirit and the dynamics of the Movement he led, it is first and foremost a work of art. Literature and history are complementary in fictional texts on a historical character like Kimathi. The creative writer dealing with historical characters and events in times past as Roger Webster says, therefore chooses a convenient way of arranging certain ideas and more significantly ways of understanding these ideas. Although the characters and events portrayed are historical, Kahiga has injected a creative imagination dimension in reconstructing them. This reconstruction is mainly achieved through the manipulation of language by employing various stylistic and narrative strategies.

This study has taken advantage of the ideas of Katie Wales who posits that the goal of most stylistics studies is not simply to describe the formal features of the text for their own sake, but in order to show their functional significance for the interpretation of
the text. Specifically we have looked at different levels of stylistic realization in the reconstruction of Kimathi and the Mau Mau Movement.

We started this study by analyzing the use of the omniscient narrator as a stylistic device. We have been able to establish that the narrator, has presented the facts on the Mau Mau Movement soberly and impartially through his comments, moralisations and generalisations. The omniscient narrator has been able to trace the causes that gave rise to the Mau Mau Movement and those that led to its disintegration by knowing all and explaining, when necessary, the inner workings of the minds of the various characters and their motivations.

We have also looked at the use of figurative language and established that Kahiga's use of language at the level of imaginative comparison does not only heighten our aesthetic pleasure; but has also contributed significantly to the reconstruction of Kimathi and the Mau Mau Movement.

We have analyzed the use of the letters, diaries and reports, both as a means of authenticating the author's fidelity to historical facts: and as a stylistic device designed to further the plot and the narrative thread.

The study is a contribution to literary criticism on fiction based on history.

Aristotle, *Classical Literary Criticism*.


Wanjala, C., “In Search of a Revolutionary Hero,” *Journal of Kenya Historical Review*.


Aristotle, *Classical Literary Criticism*.


