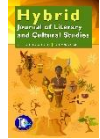




Manipulation of narrative paradigm in Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Wrestling with the Devil* (2018)



Review article



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Alfred Mugambi Ong'ang'a¹, Henry Indangasi² & Makau Kitata³

Department of Literature, University of Nairobi, Kenya

Correspondence: ongangaalfred@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4695-1261>

Abstract

This article evaluates Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's manipulation of the narrative paradigm in recasting his prison narrative *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary* to come up with *Wrestling with the Devil*. Grounding the discussion on the theories of narratology, rhetoric and autobiography, this study argues that Ngũgĩ's revision of his prison narrative serves both a political and rhetorical agenda. The study concludes that Ngũgĩ's manipulation of the narrative paradigm advances his anti-imperialist ideology and anti-dictatorship agenda. However, it works against his rhetorical intention of advancing his political agenda since it compromises his ethos and evokes the reader's mistrust of some of his claims in the text. The study recommends that this kind of criticism should be extended to other revised autobiographical writings to establish their writers' rhetorical intentions of recasting their works.

Keywords: narrative paradigm, prison narrative, rhetorical intention, *Wrestling with the Devil*



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Public Interest Statement

For public interest, though Ngũgĩ's manipulation of the narrative paradigm advances his anti-imperialist ideology and anti-dictatorship agenda, it works against his rhetorical intention of advancing his political agenda since it compromises his ethos and evokes the reader's mistrust of some of his claims in the text.

1.0 Introduction

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o is a Kenyan writer who was controversially detained from December 1977 to December 1978 by President Jomo Kenyatta's administration. As a result, he wrote the experience of his political detention in his prison narrative *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary* which was first published in 1981. However, in the year 2018, Ngũgĩ recast *Detained* to come up with a revised edition of his prison narrative which he has renamed *Wrestling with the Devil*. What is peculiar about the revised edition is the fact that the author has made tremendous changes on his prison narrative which can attract the readers' curiosity.

In various studies which have been conducted on Ngũgĩ's *Detained*, the tendency of many scholars has been discussions on the appalling prison conditions and dictatorship in the text. In her examination of Ngũgĩ's *Detained*, Muchiri (2014) argues that the memoir is a record of the experiences of advocates of anti-neocolonialism and anti-dictatorship. She relates the prison experiences in the text to that of the infamous Nyayo torture chambers, Kamĩĩ Prison and other prisons in Kenya and the state's efforts to suppress public intellectuals (Muchiri, 2014, p.89). However, Muchiri's study is delimited to the thematic concerns in the memoirs and was conducted before Ngũgĩ's revision of the prison narrative in his recast version *Wrestling with the Devil* which was published in 2018. In this article, we have examined the rhetorical intentions of the author's manipulation of the narrative paradigm in the revised version of his prison narrative vis-à-vis his political and ideological agenda. We have done this against the possible rhetorical impact of this strategy on the readers.

According to Gikandi (2000), Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o has demonstrated the opposition that exists between the state and the artists in his memoir *Detained*. He notes that the artist's role in the text is that of unmasking the moral decadence of the dictatorial state and that the act of writing is a way of overcoming the culture of silence that exists amongst the oppressed people. Gikandi also asserts that Ngũgĩ utilizes the space of his incarceration as an opportunity for his self-reflection as a writer and an occasion for affiliation with prison literature that is imbued with the tradition of literary resistance. What, however, Gikandi doesn't bring out is the fact that, in foregrounding the conflict between the writer and the Kenya government, Ngũgĩ attempts to draw

the reader into the conflict between him and the government; hence, inviting the reader to take sides, preferably to condemn the government and empathize with him. Gikandi's analysis also concentrates only on Ngũgĩ's messages in the memoir and overlooks the author's style and rhetorical agenda as the author elevates his own subjectivity in the text. Furthermore, there is need, for example, to evaluate Ngũgĩ's choice of words in his *ad hominem* argumentum strategy in articulating his arguments against some characters in the text such as his response to Mazrui's accusation of the author's promotion of ethnocentrism. In this article, we further evaluate Ngũgĩ's deliberate mutilation and manipulation of his original prison narrative in his recast version *Wrestling with the Devil* with the aim of ascertaining the possible political as well as rhetorical agenda of this rhetorical strategy.

In his discussion on "Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's Detention," Lindfors (1999) claims that Ngũgĩ was detained by the Kenya Government "for reasons that have never been publically explained" (Lindfors, 1999, p.93) to show that the author's imprisonment for one year was unwarranted. Lindfors raises two questions on Ngũgĩ's detention which he claims have never been answered by the Kenya Government: "(1) why was he detained, and (2) upon being released from detention, why was he prevented from resuming his position at the University of Nairobi?" (p.94). Lindfors further exonerates Ngũgĩ from being involved in any treasonable or subversive activity to warrant his detention, arguing that the author "had committed no known crimes, criminal or civil" and declares that the author's "offence must have been a political one" (p.94). Therefore, Lindfors seems to suggest that Ngũgĩ's detention was prompted by his writings whose criticism of the Kenya government did not go well with President Jomo Kenyatta's dictatorial regime. For example, apart from attributing Ngũgĩ's arrest to his political novel *Petals of Blood* and play *Ngaahika Ndeenda (I Will Marry When I Want)*, Lindfors also reveals that the media played a great role in presenting the novel as being dangerously critical to the government by describing it as an "explosive" book and a "bombshell" (p.95). However, in Ngũgĩ's recast prison narrative in *Wrestling with the Devil*, it is evident that the author has expunged or rephrased some critical information that implicated Jomo Kenyatta for his detention. In this regard, this article examines the author's manipulation of the narrative paradigm to expose his attempt to conceal some things he exposed in his earlier memoir *Detained* with the aim of attaining some rhetorical and political leverages in the recast version.

Wilkinson (1983) argues that Ngũgĩ's *Detained* is not just about Ngũgĩ's imprisonment; it also reveals "a series of reflections" on the deeper implications of detention and its "probable motivations". She argues that Ngũgĩ's detention can be linked to the author's "participation in the writing and production of *Ngaahika Ndeenda*

(*I Will Marry When I Want*)” and the successful involvement of the Gĩkũyũ peasants and workers in its production. Her claim that the implications of the play led to Ngũgĩ’s incarceration points to the possible political motivations behind the author’s detention as well as its relevance to the post-independence Kenya’s realities. Furthermore, Wilkinson asserts that prison, in *Detained*, is symbolically a reflection of the larger Kenyan society because of the composition of its detainees who are drawn from “different religions and nationalities and different moments of Kenyan history” (Wilkinson, 1983, p.613). The prisoners represent “all the major crises of post-independence Kenya” such as “the KPU crisis of 1969, the alleged military coup of 1971, the J. M. Kariuki crisis of 1975 and its parliamentary aftermath, and the question of national (particularly Somali) minorities”. She sees Ngũgĩ as a symbol of the “growing opposition of the peasantry and working class”. However, her description of Ngũgĩ as one of the “peasantry and the working class” problematizes the author’s identity since, though he is a member of the exploited working class, he cannot possibly be considered a member of the peasantry class. After all, Ngũgĩ, as a university professor, cannot squarely fit into the class of the peasantry villagers of the Kamĩrĩthu Community Education and Cultural Centre. Ngũgĩ’s strategic position and identity in the text can, therefore, be understood against his rhetorical intentions, an approach Wilkinson has overlooked in her analysis of the memoir.

From the foregoing discussions, it is apparent that studies that have been done on Ngũgĩ’s prison narrative have tended to focus mainly on thematic issues in the text while paying little attention to the author’s craft. Ngũgĩ’s prison narrative falls in the creative nonfiction genre; hence, the reader would expect that any alterations to the claims made in such writings should be properly accounted for by the author because of the implied pact that exists between the author and the reader. Mazzeo (2012) argues that nonfiction authors “must be dedicated to preserving the truth of their stories – the who, what, why, where, when, and how” and honour the “nonfiction contract” which requires that “part of writing nonfiction means making a commitment to telling the truth” (Mazzeo, 2012, pp.2, 16-17). Similarly, the idea of a nonfiction writer’s fidelity to telling the truth in one’s writings has been emphasized by Philippe Lejeune in his famous essay “The Autobiographical Pact.” According to Lejeune (1989), in self-writing, the author should establish some form of contract with the reader in which he/she writes the truth about his/her own life; hence, his definition of life writing as “a retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality,” (Lejeune 1989, p.4).

Therefore, in this article we discuss the various changes which Ngũgĩ has made in his recast prison memoir that include changing the title and expunging some crucial information which he has not accounted for in the new version of his prison narrative. Our discussion is cognizant of the fact that the author's manipulation of the narrative paradigm in *Wrestling with the Devil* only serves to advance his political and ideological agenda as well as attempt to persuade the reader to trust his claims. This is because narratives, according to Walter Fisher, have a persuasive power and can manipulate the readers to alter their values, beliefs and attitudes toward a writer's claims (Fisher, 1985).

2.0 Implausible Justification for Recasting *Detained*

The reasons Ngũgĩ has provided for recasting his prison narrative are not only too sketch but also rhetorically weak. In a brief section titled "Note to This Edition" at the beginning of *Wrestling with the Devil*, Ngũgĩ merely informs the reader that, in the new edition, he has "shorn of many dated historical references and documents" to enable him to "focus on the drama of the writing of a novel, *Devil on the Cross*, in prison." Curiously, Ngũgĩ has asserted, as he recounts the prison narrative in the revised edition in 2018, that Kenya is no longer "under the reign of terror of a one-person, one-party state" as compared to when he published *Detained* in 1981. What does this imply to the reader? Ngũgĩ has mellowed his vindictive attitude towards Jomo Kenyatta's government and family because of his political and ideological reasons. By contrasting the dictatorial regime of 1981 with what he presumes to be a democratic Kenya in 2017, Ngũgĩ underscores his embittered tone towards ex-president Daniel Arap Moi's regime while taking a softer stand for the regimes under the Kenyatta family. Nevertheless, it should be noted that, whereas he describes the government under President Uhuru Kenyatta as a democratic Kenya, it was during the 2017 General Elections when Kenya's Supreme Court annulled the presidential results after the opposition parties contested the results owing to undemocratic practices and gross violations of the election rules and regulations. According to the *Daily Nation* (2017), the Supreme Court of Kenya annulled the presidential election results and "indicted the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC), saying it conducted the elections contrary to the dictates of the constitution and poll laws." *The New York Times* (2017) reported that the election result was declared "invalid, null and void" after the Supreme Court jury "argued that the vote had been electronically manipulated to assure a victory for President Uhuru Kenyatta."

Again, Ngũgĩ's claim that he has shorn of many historical issues in the revised version is not convincing since there are still several references to Kenya's colonial

experiences in the revised edition. Therefore, this can only be seen as his attempt to conceal other motives for recasting his old version of prison narrative in *Detained* to come up with the new version which he claims is “shorter and leaner”. In fact, in *Wrestling with the Devil*, there are three chapters titled “Colonial Lazarus Rises from the Dead”, “The Culture of Silence and Fear” and “Wrestling with Colonial Demons” where Ngũgĩ has introspected into details on some events in the colonial history of Kenya. For instance, Ngũgĩ has dwelt extensively on the role that Mau Mau guerrillas and other freedom fighters played in the struggle for Kenya’s independence. He has also recounted how the colonial government used detention of Kenyans in concentration camps and prisons in order to create a culture of fear and silence among the anticolonial nationalists and the restive Kenyan population.

3. Narrative Alterations

In recasting his prison memoir *Detained* to come up with his new edition *Wrestling with the Devil*, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o has not only made tremendous alternations and mutilations on his prison narrative, but also overhauled the title of the memoir. The change of a title of a nonfiction text raises serious implications and questions which, perhaps, the author did not take into consideration when recasting his prison memoir. Some of the questions that arise are: Does he intend that the newly revised edition replaces the original one or the two should be read synchronously? Should the reader who has read the original text ignore the claims he made in it and embrace the ones in the new version? Should a new reader start with the old version before embarking on the new one? Supposing Ngũgĩ was to be interviewed on his prison experience, would he prefer to use *Detained* or *Wrestling with the Devil* as a point of his reference? These questions and many more unstated ones have not been addressed by the author in the “Note to This Edition” section in the new recast version. Significantly, the last question demonstrates the dilemma that not only the writer himself is likely to face, but also the confusion that will confront the reader because of the alterations made to the title as well as the content of the memoir.

According to Conway (2019), a book title is the author’s reference tool which is used “on the cover, on your web page, in interviews, blog postings, marketing materials, book catalogs, and agent submissions.” Conway further asserts that a book’s title is its “first marketing and selling tool”; hence, significant in promoting or dwarfing sales of a given book. To underscore the immense function of a book title, Conway reveals that it attracts the reader’s attentions and “captures the attention of an agent, editor, publisher, the media, book clubs and book buyers at bookstores and libraries.” Furthermore, it also helps the author’s audience to easily trace a book from

among many books in a bookstore or library. Conway's arguments imply that a title of any book is the author's first rhetorical act which will appeal to a writer's intended reader by attracting the attention of his/her eye as well as arousing the interest to read the text.

A crucial question that should also be addressed is: In terms of its copyright, should the two versions of his prison narrative be treated as different books? In *Managing Intellectual Property in the Book Publishing Industry*, Seeber and Balkwill (2007) note that the copyrights law provides moral rights to a writer such as "the right of paternity (the right to claim authorship of the work) and the right of integrity (the right to object to any distortion, mutilation or other modification of, or other derogatory action in relation to, the said work, which would be prejudicial to the author's honor or reputation)" (Seeber and Balkwill 2007, p.15). On this basis, it is fairly plausible to argue that Ngũgĩ's act of changing the title of his prison memoir as well as expunging whole chapters and rephrasing or omitting certain sentences from the recast version infringes the moral right of integrity which he himself should have upheld.

In *Wrestling with the Devil*, Ngũgĩ has further revised the "Dedication" section by eliminating different categories of people to whom he had dedicated his prison narrative *Detained*. In the recast version, Ngũgĩ dedicates the revised edition to only one category of readers: "all writers in prison". However, he has not accounted for this change; hence, this leaves the reader with the question: Has Ngũgĩ changed his perception on some people he had so much faith in when he was detained? The answer to this question is in the affirmative owing to the fact that Ngũgĩ might have possibly realized that some of those people he had had so much faith in did not actually deserve it. Among the categories of people expunged from the dedication section include "people in Kenya, Africa and the world" who fought for his release such as university students, writers' unions, Amnesty International, teachers' organizations, workers, the residents of Kamĩĩthu and his family. By eliminating these people, Ngũgĩ is informing us that they no longer matter to him owing to the long lapse of time between the publication of *Detained* in 1981 and *Wrestling with the Devil* in 2018. Therefore, he no longer considers them potential readers of the revised version.

Despite the crucial role of photographs in supporting narration in nonfiction writings, Ngũgĩ has expunged the photographs of Kenyans in London who were demonstrating for his release. Among the excluded photos is a conspicuous one that occupies a whole page showing a black demonstrator holding a poster that reads "WAINGEREZA WALIFUNGA KIMATHI (the British colonialist imprisoned Kimathi), "MZEE ANAFUNGA NGUGI" (Elder Kenyatta imprisons Ngũgĩ). Another poster that

reads “RELEASE NGUGI, END POLITICAL REPRESSION” is ironically held by a white man instead of Ngũgĩ’s fellow black Kenyan or African. Ngũgĩ’s act of removing these pictures may be based on his realization that the class of demonstrators who agitated for his release were different from those who he claims he represents in *Detained* and *Wrestling with the Devil*. Nevertheless, by removing the only photographs that support his claim about people’s agitation for his release, Ngũgĩ weakens the rhetorical impact of the text on the reader. Photographs are part of the paratextual evidence which a writer of nonfiction uses to authenticate and support one’s narration and claims (Were, 2017, p.8; Muchiri, 2008, p.43).

In the recast version, Ngũgĩ has expunged three sections with key information on his detention from *Detained*: the “Preface”, “Section Two: Letters from Prison” and “Section Three: Prison Aftermaths”. The “Preface” section of *Detained* expresses Ngũgĩ’s angry tone at Jomo Kenyatta and his dictatorial regime. It sets the pace and tone of the text right from the onset of the text. By eliminating it in the revised edition, *Wrestling with the Devil*, such important information is lost and this invites the reader’s doubts about his motive. For instance, in this section, Ngũgĩ’s claim that his differences with those who instigated his detention were “ideological” and represented “certain social forces” informs the reader about the real reason for his detention. He also declares that he has discussed detention “not as a personal affair” between him and those in power, “but as a social, political and historical phenomenon” (*Detained*, p. xi). This demonstrates that Ngũgĩ’s political and Marxist ideological engagements also aggravated his detention by the Jomo Kenyatta government.

Ngũgĩ’s act of expunging the whole section on “Preface” from his detention narrative without valid reasons is likely to raise the readers’ suspicions and speculations about his possible political and ideological intentions. Among the obvious possible reason is to obliterate his claim that his incarceration was ordered by President Jomo Kenyatta which is evident when he says:

I am told, for instance, that some time in December 1977, two gentlemen very highly placed in the government flew to Mombasa and demanded an urgent audience with Jomo Kenyatta. They each held a copy of *Petals of Blood* in one hand, and in the other, a copy of *Ngaahika Ndeenda*. The audience granted, they then proceeded to read him, out of context of course, passages, lines and words allegedly subversive as evidence of highly suspicious intentions. The only way to thwart those intentions – whatever they were – was to detain him who harboured such dangerous intentions, they pleaded. Some others had sought outright and

permanent silencing, in the manner of J.M. Kariuki, but on second thoughts this was quashed for national security. And so to detention I was sent. (Ngũgĩ, 1981, p. xvi).

This extract exposes Ngũgĩ's serious accusations against Jomo Kenyatta for not only his detention, but also of assassinations of politicians who were critical of his government such as J.M. Kariuki who was brutally murdered and his body dumped in the Ngong forest in 1975. The extract also reveals that among the reasons for Ngũgĩ's incarceration were his political and anti-imperialist ideology in his writings. Lindfors, in his essay "Ngũgĩ's Detention" also attributes the author's detention to the publication of *Petals of Blood* and production of *Ngaahika Ndeenda*. On *Petals of Blood*, Lindfors blames the media for having scared the Kenyatta administration by depicting the novel as being severely critical to the government by describing it as an "explosive" book and a "bombshell" (Lindfors, 1999, p.95). Despite these important insights on his imprisonment, Ngũgĩ has excluded this information from his revised prison narrative, *Wrestling with the Devil*.

Ngũgĩ might have also been motivated by a desire to obliterate from the prison memoir some of his personal weaknesses which seem to be damaging his personal ethos. For instance, his response to and antagonism with the media reports about the possible causes of his detention. Specifically, his response to reports in *The Weekly Review* magazine suggesting that he was detained because of his leaning towards the communist ideology and got financial support for the publication of his books which were critical to Kenya's politics and economic issues from the Soviet Union is not convincing. Instead of denying or clarifying his stance on these reports, Ngũgĩ merely dismisses them as mere "speculative journalism," "ideological offensive," "invention" or press hostility (Ngũgĩ, 1981, pp. vii – xviii). One question that arises from Ngũgĩ's response to the media reports is: why should the media be hostile to Ngũgĩ? Put differently, what had Ngũgĩ done to the media to warrant his claim on media hostility? Unfortunately, Ngũgĩ has not hinted at the possible reasons for his claim of media hostility against him. Therefore, in the revision of his prison memoir, Ngũgĩ might have realised this weakness and decided to omit such information from the recast version.

Ngũgĩ's response to Ali Mazrui's article in which he was accused of advancing "Kikuyu centrism" in the Department of Literature at the University of Nairobi during his tenure as the head of the department is also wanting. Mazrui had reported that "Ngũgĩ's recruitment policies as head of the department included a particularity for Kikuyu candidates" and that "half of the of the Department of Literature at the University of Nairobi consisted of Kikuyu, and prospects for an increased percentage

of Kikuyu were high” (Ngũgĩ, 1981, p. xxii). By any standards, these were serious allegations leveled against Ngũgĩ and, therefore, the reader expects that he rationally and persuasively defends himself or even offers an explanation for that situation. However, instead of addressing the issue of ethnocentrism raised, he arrogantly resorts to personal attacks:

How does one begin to answer such unprincipled attacks? ...These attacks had better be passed over in silence. These petty-bourgeois academics fit into the category of intellectuals once described by Karl Marx as geniuses in the ways of bourgeois stupidity! (Ngũgĩ, 1981, p. xxiii)

From this quotation, it is clear that Ngũgĩ’s response is in form of an unprecedented attack of his colleagues in the Department of Literature as well as Ali Mazrui rather than mounting an argument against their claims. In this context, therefore, Ngũgĩ attempts to influence the reader’s attitude towards his opponents by employing a fallacy commonly referred to as *argumentum ad hominem*. Namwamba (2010), in *Think Critically and Creatively*, explains that this kind of fallacy “is committed when, instead of trying to disprove the truth of what is asserted, one attacks the man who made the assertion.” Namwamba further notes that this kind of “irrelevant argument” is employed “to persuade through the psychological process of transference” in which “an attitude of disapproval towards a person can be evoked” (Namwamba, 2010, p.247). Would Ngũgĩ have omitted the preface to obliterate the kind of arrogance exemplified in the extract above? In response to this question, it is important to consider the questions Ochieng (1985) has raised concerning a writer’s motives of life writing: “What makes an individual assume that the story of his life would be of interest to others? Is there a doubt, or problem, in his past which he must explain? Is he simply digging a niche of permanence in history? Is he a megalomaniac? Or is he truly concerned that he is a great man and therefore worthy of emulation?” (Ochieng, 1985, p.80). From these questions, Ochieng hints that one possible reason for a writer’s autobiographical writing is to tackle some personal doubts about one’s past. As such, considering his current status as a distinguished professor, Ngũgĩ might have decided to revise his prison memoir after eighteen years since its first publication in 1981 to destroy some of the things or information which does not collocate well with his current status.

Some of the claims Ngũgĩ makes in the “Preface” section may easily fail to persuade a critical reader. For instance, he claims that when he was detained there was an “overwhelming support of the political detainees from our fourteen million

Kenyans – ordinary people, peasants and workers and students... There was also the worldwide struggle for the release of prisoners in Kenya from workers, writers and humanist organizations, progressive intellectuals, democratic minded individuals from Africa, Asia, Europe, Canada, Australia, the U.S.A. and Latin America” (Ngũgĩ 1981, p. xxiii). However, Ngũgĩ does not provide relevant evidence of photographs or media to support these claims of global mass support. He does not also inform us whether these “worldwide struggle” for the release of political prisoners had been experienced prior to his imprisonment to press for the release of those who had languished in prison for many years. It is fair, therefore, to argue that Ngũgĩ might have been compelled to destroy these weaknesses which are apparent in *Detained* by omitting the section on “Preface” from his recast prison narrative *Wrestling with the Devil*.

My submission is that, if Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o were fully at peace with all the claims and arguments he wrote in *Detained*, there would have been no compelling reason for him to painstakingly recast his prison narrative to produce a different version of his claims or the truth about his detention. Therefore, Ngũgĩ’s manipulation of the narrative paradigm in his prison narrative should be considered as an act of hindsight that is meant to conceal some of his weakness since, as Ochieng points out that most of the autobiographical writers “tend to be those who fear that they have failed, or have not performed up to public expectation and therefore must explain their records” (Ochieng, 1985, p.81). Thus, Ngũgĩ has deliberately rewritten his prison memoir to defend himself against the failures he might have made in his past or to distort some historical records which are contentious to his readers and the public in general.

In *Wrestling with the Devil*, Ngũgĩ has also expunged the whole of section two of *Detained* which is titled “Letters from Prison”. This section contains four important letters which Ngũgĩ claims he wrote to different people while he was detained at Kamĩtĩ Maximum Security Prison in 1978. He has also included another letter which he claims was written by one of his inmates at Kamĩtĩ. However, Ngũgĩ has not provided a justification for expunging these letters from the recast memoir apart from merely claiming that his aim was to focus on the process of writing his Gĩkũyũ novel *Caitani Mutharaba-ini (Devil on the Cross)*. This is actually a strange reasoning on the part of Ngũgĩ. The letters that have been eliminated from the revised edition contain important information about Ngũgĩ’s experiences in prison, which, after all, should be the main focus of the memoir since they reveal his pathos, experiences and support his claims. This results in the reader of the new version missing important insights about Ngũgĩ’s detention and that of other political prisoners. According to Were (2017), autobiographical truth is enhanced in a text through the use of

“paratextual evidence such as letters, photographs, dedications, prefaces, speeches, dates” (Were, 2017, p.8). Corresponding with Were, Muchiri (2008) informs us that letters are a form of “self-revelation” and are used to validate a writer’s claims (Muchiri, 2008, p.43). Therefore, Ngũgĩ’s omission of these letters makes the reader to contest some of his claims in the recast memoir. In view of Were’s and Muchiri’s ideas, I argue that Ngũgĩ’s act of expunging these letters from the recast version of his prison narrative, *Wrestling with the Devil*, waters down the rhetorical impact of the memoir on the reader and casts doubt on the motive for his act. Thus, the reader interrogates the validity of his recast prison narrative because autobiographical truth should be “measured by consistency, cohesion, the seriousness of the subject in their realistic rendition of events, and the courage to risk to talk about oneself” (Were, 2017, p.8). On this basis, thus, the truth on Ngũgĩ’s claims in *Wrestling with the Devil* becomes wanting. To comprehend what the reader of the revised edition will miss, I have analysed each letter separately.

Ngũgĩ’s letter to his wife Nyambura which is dated 13th November 1978 (Ngũgĩ, 1981, pp.171-172) reveals that, while being imprisoned, he had a toothache and bleeding gums which made him experience a lot of pain. He informs his wife that the prison authorities refused to take him to hospital or allow him to see his visiting family because of his refusal to be chained as a prerequisite for that. He further expresses his frustrations caused by the prison authorities’ refusal to respond to his official complaints about his ill-health and injustice. Since this letter served as a conduit through which he communicated with his family, the reader cannot be convinced that it was less important than the writing of his novel, *Devil on the Cross*.

In a letter Ngũgĩ wrote to Mr. Muhindi Munene, the prisons security officer in charge of the detained and restricted, which is dated 15th June 1978 (Ngũgĩ, 1981, pp.173-176), he complains about not being taken to hospital and reveals that he had not been tried in court despite having been in prison for many months. Through this letter, Ngũgĩ reveals that the government did not furnish him with any detailed reasons for his arrest except its vague claim that he “had engaged in activities and utterances which are dangerous to the good government of Kenya and its institutions”. He, however, refutes these allegations and asserts that he was detained because of being involved in the writing of the play, *Ngaahika Ndeenda*, and the performance of the same by peasants and workers. In an angry tone, Ngũgĩ claims that “propertied few” in the KANU government instigated his arrest and withdrew the licence for the performance of the play. Despite the government’s position that Ngũgĩ was advocating for class warfare through his writings, he does not acknowledge this but declares that his arrest was “a complete travesty of simple justice and democracy” in

the country. This letter is crucial as it articulates and validates Ngũgĩ's claims of frustrations by prison officials and government authorities. Theodore A. Rees Cheney argues that writers of nonfiction "frequently quote all or parts of letters that help them make a point" and invite readers to "get more involved" in their stories (Ngũgĩ, 1981, p.106). By expunging this letter, therefore, Ngũgĩ creates room for the reader to mistrust the claims he makes in the letter as well as the rest of the text.

In *Wrestling with the Devil*, Ngũgĩ has further excluded two letters which he wrote to Justice Hancox who was the chairperson of the Detainees' Review Tribunal, dated 23rd July 1978 (Ngũgĩ, 1981, p.177-183). In the first letter, he complains about lack of feedback on his appearance before the Detainees' Review Tribunal, and the prison authorities' refusal to take him to hospital or allow him to see his visiting family members. He also protests against his "arbitrary arrest and detention", the "atrocious conditions" of prison and the "nauseating diet" which the inmates were subjected to. The second letter reiterates his complaints and expresses the psychological impact of detention on him and his family. However, in these letters, Ngũgĩ overindulges in expressing his Marxist ideas instead of focusing on the experiences he encountered in prison.

Adam Mathenge's letter, dated 21st August 1978, through which the detainee appealed for "proper medical treatment" (Ngũgĩ, 1981, p.197) also does not appear in *Wrestling with the Devil*. This letter exposes the deplorable conditions of sick political detainees who were denied appropriate treatment or were given wrong prescriptions by the doctors who assumed that they were suffering from mental problems. This letter is important since it supports the author's claim that the government used disease as an instrument of torture. The reader's pathos to which it appeals, therefore, dissipates in the recast version.

In *Wrestling with the Devil*, Ngũgĩ has further excluded the whole of section three which is titled "Prison Aftermaths" (Ngũgĩ, 1981, pp.202-228). This section is important as it reveals the tribulations Ngũgĩ faced after his release from detention when trying to get back to his job as associate professor at the University of Nairobi. Through the letters he wrote to the university authorities, the reader empathizes with Ngũgĩ's predicament and frustrations since these correspondences serve as his evidence that authenticate his accusations against the university administration. For instance, in a letter addressed to the Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Karanja, dated 30 January 1979, Ngũgĩ reveals to the reader his concern about his job at the University of Nairobi. However, Karanja's failure to reply to his letter may infuriate readers as they get a glimpse into the arrogance and fear of the university authorities in handling Ngũgĩ's problem. In another letter addressed to the Chairman of the University Academic Staff

Association, Ngũgĩ expresses his frustrations and anger at the University of Nairobi's administrators' failure to communicate with him or respond to his letters after his release from detention. The fact that both the Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Karanja, and the University Council Chairman, B.M. Gecaga, ignored his letters, invites the reader's outrage at the whole university administration for its mistreatment of Ngũgĩ. We get convinced by Ngũgĩ's claim that the government used the university authorities as an instrument to torture him (Ngũgĩ, 1981, p.205).

Furthermore, in a letter to Ngũgĩ by the Registrar of the University of Nairobi, Mr. E. N. Gicui, dated 3rd August 1979, the author has exposed the university authorities' fear of the Kenya government's decree on his dismissal from his job. Ngũgĩ's response to the university authorities in his letter to Gicui, dated 18th August 1979, underscores this fear by referring to the Vice-Chancellor's fear to communicate to him in writing. The letter further exposes how the university exploited him by depositing his terminal dues and salary into his bank account for only six months without any written document to indicate the reason or the person involved in transactions at the bank. However, Ngũgĩ's claim that the money was deposited by an anonymous person from the university to cover-up any evidence that could implicate a specific person for his woes can be seen as an act of overreaction on some claims he makes in the memoir. This is because, despite his precarious position in the face of political onslaught on him, banks have strict regulations that govern its transactions with their clients. One of these regulations is that the name of the customer involved in any kind of transaction should be provided. Notwithstanding this weakness on the part of Ngũgĩ's claims, the University of Nairobi administration, was successfully used by the Kenya government to suppress, frustrate and exploit Ngũgĩ.

The "Prison Aftermaths" section provides a caption of parliamentary proceedings of the Kenya government's ministerial statement to parliament on 31 July 1979. The author has provided this as evidence for his claims of the government's malicious involvement in his dismissal from the University of Nairobi (Ngũgĩ, 1981, pp.207-209). For instance, the Minister for Education, Mr. Maina Wanjigi's claim that Ngũgĩ's contract with the university had expired and that a misunderstanding between him and the university had hampered its renewal contradicts what the reader already knows. Therefore, in this context, Ngũgĩ's "Press Release" on 20th August 1979 which contradicts the minister's statement to parliament by claiming that it "grossly misrepresented" and "falsified" his case (Ngũgĩ, 1981, p.214), criminalizes the state's way of treating the author. This revelation attracts the reader's mistrust of the Kenya government's intentions and ways of handling Ngũgĩ's woes.

Ngũgĩ's exclusion of Willy Mutunga's (the then Secretary-General of University Staff Association) "Brief Report on the USU's Struggle to Have Professor Ngũgĩ Resume His Duties at the University" (Ngũgĩ, 1981, pp.219-226) can also be seen as his strategy of manipulating the narrative paradigm of his prison discourse. Mutunga's report is crucial as it augments and strengthens Ngũgĩ's claims about his arrest, detention and the subsequent mistreatment he faced during and after his detention. The report confirms Ngũgĩ's claims that the government did not give proper reasons for his detention; that there were "intermittent student demonstrations expressing resentment at Professor Ngũgĩ's detention and demanding his release"; and, that the University of Nairobi did not make any "official comment on the fate of its member" (Ngũgĩ, 1981, p.219). It further reveals that Ngũgĩ did actually write to the Vice-Chancellor and the Chairman of the University Council, and that the Vice-Chancellor, in the presence of the Registrar of the University, informed Ngũgĩ that "his case was beyond the university" and that he "needed clearance from somewhere" else (Ngũgĩ, 1981, p.222). However, his claim that the university students rioted while the academic staff kept silent may be considered inaccurate since Willy Mutunga was a lecturer and the Secretary General of the University Staff Association; hence, his report on the association's fight for the resumption of his duties at the university articulates the staff's protest at his dismissal. Ngũgĩ's exclusion of this document can be interpreted as an expression of the author's arrogance in his non-recognition of the University Staff Association's efforts in supporting his fight against oppression.

Also excluded in the revised edition are the extracts from the newspapers, the *Hansard* and magazines which provide critical information on Ngũgĩ's detention. An excerpt from the *Hansard*, dated Wednesday, 11 June 1980, reveals that the Kenya Parliament had thanked President Moi for releasing the detainees and asked the government and the private sector to assist them secure jobs to enable them cater for their families. Another extract from the *Daily Nation* of 17th July 1980, reveals that the University Staff Union, among other things, had given the university an ultimatum to reconsider Ngũgĩ's employment by August 1st 1980. However, an extract from the *Sunday Nation* of 21 July 1980 reveals that President Moi had threatened to ban two workers' unions, the University Staff Association and the Union of the Civil Servants for involving themselves in politics (Ngũgĩ, 1981, p.227). Finally, the *Weekly Review* of 11 July 1980 reported that President Moi "startled many Kenyans when he said ex-detainees who were detained after Kenya received her political independence, would be the last to be considered for available jobs" (Ngũgĩ, 1981, p.228). This information supports Ngũgĩ's claim that the state perpetuated his woes even after his imprisonment at Kamĩĩ Prison.

Apart from excluding some sections or chapters from *Detained* in the recast edition, Ngũgĩ has expunged some information or rephrased some sentences or paragraphs to create new meanings and reconstruct a new form of autobiographical truth in *Wrestling with the Devil*. For example, in *Detained*, Ngũgĩ describes Kamĩĩĩ prison cells as “Kenyatta’s tiger cages” (Ngũgĩ, 1981, p.3); hence implicating President Jomo Kenyatta as the person who was responsible for the arrests and detention of political prisoners. However, in *Wrestling with the Devil*, Ngũgĩ has deliberately excluded this accusatory information from his prison narrative. By excluding this sentence from the recast version, Ngũgĩ cleverly veers from directly attacking Jomo Kenyatta and tones down his bitterness towards the former president. The question that, therefore, comes into the reader’s mind is: Could Ngũgĩ’s decision have been influenced by the current political dispensation in Kenya? This is a plausible factor because, when he revised his prison memoir, his relationship with Jomo Kenyatta’s son, Uhuru Kenyatta (then the president in Kenya), was friendly, thus contributing to his change of heart towards the Kenyatta family.

Some sentences in the recast version have been rephrased to acquire a new meaning and alter Ngũgĩ’s position on some people or the government. One such a case is the sentence which reads, “The government could not have been ignorant about the possible results of those experiments in mental torment: Valium was the most frequently prescribed drug in Kamĩĩĩ Prison. The doctor expected a detainee to be mad or depressed unless proved otherwise” (Ngũgĩ, 1981, p.7). In this context, the term “government” implies the top leadership of the Kenya government that include the office of the president and other organs of the state. Therefore, the author, in this case, would like to persuade the reader that President Jomo Kenyatta and his entire system of the government should be condemned for the sadistic treatment of the political prisoners. However, in *Wrestling with the Devil*, Ngũgĩ has rephrased the statement by narrowing the accusation to the prison officials when he says, “The officials could not have been ignorant about the possible results of these experiments in mental torment” (Ngũgĩ, 2018, p.10). We cannot assume that Ngũgĩ’s replacement of the terms “government” with “officials” is just a matter of syntactic or lexical choice. Ngũgĩ’s intention in making such subtle changes can only be political or ideological rather than aesthetic. The author redirects his anger at the prison officials rather than at the entire Kenyatta administration. However, such a strategy may seem naive to the reader since, substituting prison “officials” for “government” does not persuade the reader that Kenyatta cannot directly take blame. It problematizes Ngũgĩ’s autobiographical truth value in the two memoirs as the reader is left wondering which version of truth one should trust.

In *Wrestling with the Devil*, Ngũgĩ further mellowed his earlier hostile attack on Jomo Kenyatta's pro-imperialist and capitalist mindset. This can be seen in the different ways he manipulates the narrative on Kenyatta in the two versions of his prison memoirs. For instance, in *Detained*, the author categorically attacks President Jomo Kenyatta and the British government for promoting cultural imperialism and suppressing African languages in Kenya to persuade the reader on his radical decision to write his works in Gĩkũyũ language when he argues:

I had resolved to use a language which did not have a modern novel, a challenge to myself, and a way of affirming my faith in the possibilities of the languages of all the different Kenyan nationalities, languages whose development as vehicles for Kenyan people's anti-imperialist struggles had been actively suppressed by the British colonial regime (1895-1963) and by the neocolonial regime of Kenyatta and his comprador KANU cohorts. (Ngũgĩ, 1981, p.8)

However, in *Wrestling with the Devil*, Ngũgĩ has rephrased the above as follows:

I would write in Gĩkũyũ, a language that did not yet have a modern novel, as a challenge to myself, a way of affirming my faith in the possibilities of the languages of all the different Kenyan nationalities, languages whose growth as vehicles for people's struggles and development had been actively suppressed by the British colonial regime (1895-1963) and now its postcolonial successor. (Ngũgĩ, 2018, p.11)

The quotations above reveal two things in Ngũgĩ's attempt to manipulate the reader erroneously. Firstly, the quotations clearly demonstrate that, in *Wrestling with the Devil*, Ngũgĩ has deliberately avoided directly accusing "Kenyatta and his comprador KANU cohorts" of promoting imperialism in Kenya. He has done this for political and ideological reasons which can be discerned in his attempt to tone down his criticism of Kenyatta's political weaknesses and excesses which aggravated Kenya's postcolonial problems. In *Detained* he talks of "people's anti-imperialist struggles" while in *Wrestling with the Devil* he only refers to "people's struggles". This may be a pointer to the possibility of change in Ngũgĩ's hardline stance against imperialism and Kenyatta's act of perpetuating the same vice in the country. This change could be triggered by a number of things. For instance, it could be because Ngũgĩ lives and works in America which is one of the biggest capitalistic state in the world; hence, posing a contradiction with the author's anti-imperialism stance. Furthermore, as

pointed earlier, Ngũgĩ's cordial relationship with the Kenyatta family occasioned by his close rapport with President Uhuru Kenyatta could be a significant factor in making the alterations seen in *Wrestling with the Devil*.

Secondly, the quotations reveal his flawed portrayal of both the colonial and postcolonial governments in suppressing the use of indigenous Kenyan languages in literary productions and education. There is adequate evidence that indicate that both the colonial and postcolonial governments promoted the teaching of mother tongue languages in Kenyan schools. Nabea (2009), in his study "Language Policy in Kenya: Negotiation with Hegemony," informs us that as early as 1909, the United Missionary Conference in Kenya "adopted the use of mother tongue in the first three classes in primary school, Kiswahili in two of the middle classes in primary, while English was to be used in the rest of the classes up to the university" (Nabea 2009, p.123). He further notes that different commissions such as "Beecher's 1949, Binn's 1952 and the Drogheda Commission of 1952" all recommended the teaching of mother tongue at lower primary schools. Additionally, Nabea informs us that in 1967, the "Kenya Institute of Education (K.I.E) started producing books in various mother tongues, Kiswahili inclusive; for use in primary schools" (Nabea 2009, p.126).

In a veiled attack on President Kenyatta and other former freedom fighters, Ngũgĩ claims that the political prisoners at Kamĩĩ taught him about "nationalist anti-imperialist struggles before 1963 and on the beginnings of land grabbing and foreigners' bribery of former nationalists with token shares in their companies" (Ngũgĩ, 1981, p.9). In this case, Ngũgĩ implicates President Kenyatta and other postcolonial leaders for grabbing their people's land, amassing wealth at the expense of Kenyans and collaborating with the imperialists in exploiting Kenya's resources. However, in *Wrestling with the Devil*, Ngũgĩ excludes this information and only talks about the political prisoners having discussed with him on trivial topics about "barmaids, secretaries, teachers, and engineers as well as different aspects of social life and bourgeois rivalry in Nairobi" (Ngũgĩ, 1981, p.13). In the revised version, Ngũgĩ, therefore, seems to veer away from directly attacking not only the Kenyatta family but also other leaders who betrayed the people of Kenya through their selfishness and greed.

In his endeavor to tone down his attack on Jomo Kenyatta, Ngũgĩ has further expunged his claim that Kenyatta's book, *Suffering without Bitterness*, was not really authored by Kenyatta himself but by two British journalists (Ngũgĩ, 1981, p.89). By leaving out this serious claim on Kenyatta in his recast version, *Wrestling with the Devil*, Ngũgĩ invites the reader's doubts about his claims in the new memoir. This is because it leaves the reader to contemplate that, Ngũgĩ had either falsely attacked Kenyatta

about the authorship of the book or he is deliberately attempting to cover-up Kenyatta's weaknesses for having portrayed himself as the author of the book.

From the foregoing discussion on Ngũgĩ's manipulation of the narrative paradigm in his recast version of prison narrative, it is apparent that this strategy erodes the credibility of the author's claims in *Wrestling with the Devil*. In this context, to a great extent, Ngũgĩ contravenes Aristotle's intention of the use of rhetoric to advance's one's truth. Aristotle informs us that "things that are true and things that are just have a natural tendency to prevail over their opposites" and "we must be able to employ persuasion just as strict reasoning can be" so that "we may see clearly what the facts are". Aristotle (2008) cautions us against telling lies or falsehoods when he argues that "we must not make people believe what is wrong" (Aristotle, 2008, p.7). He further underscores the importance of saying the truth in one's arguments by stressing that "things that are true and things that are better are, by their nature, practically always easier to prove and easier to believe in" (Aristotle, 2008, p.8). For Aristotle, a person who misuses the power of speech/writing to manipulate his/her audience unjustly through false information "might do great harm" to them just like one's use of strength and wealth can "inflict the greatest of injuries by using them wrongly" (Aristotle, 2008, p.8).

4.0 Conclusion

Ngũgĩ's rhetorical intention in his manipulation of the narrative paradigm in the recast prison narrative *Wrestling with the Devil* is problematic. This is owing to the fact that, in manipulating his original prison narrative (*Detained*), the author seriously transgresses some of the cardinal tenets of autobiographical writings. The act of expunging some sections and sentences or details in the recast version can be viewed as a political strategy which is intended to conceal the truth about some historical characters and events in Kenya. Therefore, the manipulation of the narrative paradigm in the recast version works against the attainment of the rhetorical intentions and his political claims and arguments in the prison narrative. It compromises the reader's trust of the credibility of the narrator's character in the revised edition. Specifically, the act of expunging sections which have crucial information in relation to his detention as well as about Jomo Kenyatta, Kenya's first president, disparages the integrity and ethos of the narrator in the recast version. Nevertheless, this can be attributed to the lapse of time between the author's period of imprisonment and the publication of the first edition of the prison memoir, *Detained*, and its recast version *Wrestling with the Devil*. This might have affected Ngũgĩ's perception towards certain characters or

events in his earlier prison narrative, hence, making him to renege on some of his earlier claims or arguments.

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