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**A Jungian Analysis of Mugo's Guilt and Inner
Conflict in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *A Grain of
Wheat* (1967)**

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Dedication

I dedicate this humble work to my family, my supportive parents and my siblings.

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Abstract

This study analyzes the psychological development of Mugo, the protagonist in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *A Grain of Wheat*, from a Jungian perspective. It traces the development of Mugo's guilt from concealment to confession and examines the character's inner turmoil throughout this process. Using Jung's analytical psychology, the study investigates the construction of Mugo's shadow and persona and the eventual conflict between them, leading to the final confession as a step toward individuation. The research also highlights the role of the unconscious mind in shaping Mugo's personality and psychological state throughout the narrative. It reveals how unconscious forces, particularly guilt, fear, and the drive for self-preservation, affect his actions and interactions, often resulting in anxiety, suspicion, and irrationality.

Keywords: *A Grain of Wheat*, Jungian Psychoanalysis, Guilt, Shadow, Persona, Individuation.

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General Introduction

African literature draws its richness from a deep heritage of storytelling and performance, which has long existed in both oral and written forms. From the earliest classical civilizations on the continent, these traditions have played a central role in cultural expression. Over time, literature in Africa became closely linked with the broader struggle for political liberation and cultural self-definition. Some of the most powerful and influential works of African literature emerged in response to the continent's most painful historical experiences, particularly the legacies of slavery and colonial domination.

The colonial period of the 19th and 20th centuries marked a significant turning point in the development of written literature in Africa. The spread of colonial education systems, missionary schools, and Western literary forms enabled the emergence of a new generation of African writers. Ironically, although these writers were products of colonial institutions, they used their literary voices to challenge the very systems that had educated them. Literature became a powerful platform through which African intellectuals could interrogate and resist colonial ideologies. Through novels, poetry, essays, and drama, they dismantled the myths of European superiority and exposed the violence and injustices of imperial domination. African literary production during this time was closely linked with the lived experience of colonization and the desire to reclaim African identity, history, and autonomy.

The mid-twentieth century witnessed an extraordinary flourishing of African literature, especially in the decades of the 1950s and 1960s. This period coincided with the growing momentum of independence movements across the continent, as nations began to break free from European colonial rule. Literature of this era reflected the optimism, pride, and hope associated with decolonization. Writers sought to redefine national identity,

celebrate cultural heritage, and articulate the visions of a liberated Africa. Literary works often centered on themes of freedom, unity, anti-colonial struggle, and the rediscovery of African traditions and languages. The novel, in particular, emerged as a vital form for narrating the political and social transformations of African societies, with authors offering complex portrayals of colonial history and the challenges of postcolonial reconstruction.

However, the post-independence period soon revealed the contradictions and disillusionments that came with nation-building. While political independence had been achieved in many countries, the legacies of colonialism persisted in new forms. Economic dependency, political instability, and internal divisions undermined the promises of liberation. In response to this, African writers began to reassess the narrative of independence. Literature became more critical, introspective, and engaged with the unfinished business of decolonization. Writers turned their attention to issues such as neocolonial exploitation, the failures of leadership, and the disconnection between nationalist ideals and everyday realities. Through their works, they continued to assert the importance of literature as a space for reflection, resistance, and social critique.

By the end of the 1960s, it was evident that African literature was not only documenting historical change but also participating in the reimagining of African futures. Writers were no longer content with simply opposing colonialism; they now examined the deeper structural problems facing their societies and began to explore new cultural, philosophical, and political directions. Literature emerged not only as a tool of resistance but also as a medium for proposing alternative visions rooted in African experience and collective memory. This ongoing engagement with the continent's historical traumas and hopes for renewal has continued to shape African literature into a body of work that is as politically conscious as it is artistically compelling.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o, a prominent Kenyan novelist, critic, and activist, stands out as a key figure in African postcolonial literature, vividly depicting the political and psychological aftermath of colonialism in his works. Writing primarily about Kenya, Ngugi uses fiction not only as a means of storytelling but also as a form of resistance and political engagement. His novels often grapple with the tensions between personal morality and collective responsibility, exposing the inner struggles of characters who must navigate a society in transition. These figures are frequently caught between the weight of colonial trauma and the challenges of forging a new identity in a supposedly liberated nation. Through his vivid portrayals, Ngugi critiques neocolonial structures and explores how historical violence, betrayal, and ideological conflict continue to shape the postcolonial condition.

A Grain of Wheat (1967) is one of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's most powerful and widely studied novels. Set in a small Kenyan village in the days leading up to Uhuru (independence), the novel reflects on the complex legacies of colonialism, the emotional scars of the Mau Mau rebellion, and the hopes and disillusionments of a newly liberated nation. It weaves together the personal and political by presenting a multi-layered narrative in which characters are haunted by past actions, secrets, and internal dilemmas. The structure of the novel shifts between past and present and uses multiple perspectives to explore how individuals and communities confront memory, guilt, and redemption.

At the center of the narrative is Mugo, a quiet and solitary man whose silence is misread by his community as a sign of courage and integrity. As the village prepares to celebrate independence, his inner conflict deepens, eventually leading to a dramatic revelation that challenges the image others have constructed of him. Through Mugo's story, Ngugi explores not only the cost of colonial resistance but also the psychological weight of betrayal, the burden of expectation, and the search for personal truth. Mugo stands out as a

complex and psychologically rich character whose inner struggles reflect deeper themes in the novel. His emotional isolation, moral ambiguity, and personal conflict make him a compelling subject of analysis.

Previous studies have examined *A Grain of Wheat* from various perspectives. Scholars have analyzed the novel's themes, symbols, and narrative techniques. They have applied postcolonial and neocolonial theories to explore the novel's themes and to examine the relationship between the former colonizers and the colonized people. In addition, Freudian theory was applied to analyze different characters in the novel, using the concepts of the id, ego, and superego. Yet, none of these studies provided a clear exploration of Mugo's unconscious aspects and his psychological struggles through Jungian psychoanalytic theory. This research paper, therefore, seeks to address this gap by examining the development of Mugo's internal conflict, focusing on how the unconscious shapes his character and interactions throughout the novel.

My intention in choosing this topic is to explain how guilt can profoundly affect character development and interactions. I have chosen this novel not only for its success but also for its rich thematic complexity. Through this research paper, I aim to demonstrate how the unconscious aspects of Mugo's psyche, including guilt, serve as a driving force within the narrative. Guilt is the focal theme that drives the main character and consequently drives the narrative forward. This research paper illustrates how guilt influences character decisions and ultimately shapes the plot, offering a deep understanding of its role in the novel. Thus, it examines how Mugo's guilt in *A Grain of Wheat* evolves from internal turmoil to a driving force that compels him toward confession, highlighting its role in shaping his psychological state, actions and decisions throughout the novel.

Based on these objectives, the present study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How do Jungian concepts such as the shadow, persona, repression, and individuation explain the psychological transformation of Mugo in *A Grain of Wheat*?
2. In what ways does Mugo's unconscious guilt shape his behavior, decisions, and interactions with others throughout the novel?

A close reading of key passages and character analysis will be adopted. I will trace the evolution of Mugo's guilt paying attention to his internal monologue, dreams, actions, and interactions with other characters. Also, I will focus on Mugo's transformation, examining how his guilt is portrayed and how it influences his decisions and relationships. The study adopts a Jungian psychological framework to examine Mugo's character in the novel. It is based on Carl Jung's analytical psychology, which focuses on the interplay between the unconscious and conscious aspects of the psyche. The analysis focuses on the concepts of the persona, shadow, repression, projection, and individuation to examine Mugo's psychological state and transformation throughout the novel.

In terms of structure, this dissertation is divided into a general introduction, three chapters, and a general conclusion. The first chapter is a literature review of *A Grain of Wheat*, as well as other literary works written by Ngugi. The second chapter provides the theoretical background of the study, with a focus on Carl Jung's analytical psychology and the key concepts that will be used throughout this research paper. The third chapter provides the historical and literary background of the chosen novel, introduces its main characters, and examines its central themes. It then delves into an analysis of Mugo's character through Jungian theory. Finally, the general conclusion presents the research findings and emphasizes the importance of the study.

Chapter 1. Critical Perspectives on Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *A Grain of Wheat*: A Review of Literature

Introduction

Ngugi wa Thiong'o is the most prominent novelist in the realm of East African literature. He was one of the first English-speaking African writers to present the harsh colonial war from the perspective of the Gikuyu people and its effects on the individual and community. His novel *A Grain of Wheat* (1967) is a cornerstone of postcolonial African literature. Its importance lies in its nuanced exploration of the psychological, cultural and political ramifications of colonialism and the struggles for liberation in Kenya. The novel provides a subtle portrayal of the colonial legacy, shedding light on the exploitative practices that devastated the land and its people. It critiques these exploitative practices of British imperialism, such as forced labor, land dispossession, and the violent repression of resistance. Beyond its historical critique, the novel stands out for its profound psychological depth, particularly in portraying guilt, betrayal and the quest for redemption. Mugo, the protagonist, is torn between his personal fears and a sense of collective responsibility. By delving into his internal struggles, the author emphasizes the psychological wounds left by colonialism, illustrating how it disrupts identities and complicates concepts of heroism and accountability.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o's novels have been the subject of extensive critical analysis, particularly for their engagement with history, politics, and post-colonial identity. This chapter presents a review that explores various scholarly perspectives on Ngugi's work, focusing on the historical and political dimensions, narrative techniques, symbolism, and themes of guilt and redemption in *A Grain of Wheat*. The following sections will analyse these aspects, providing a deeper understanding of how Ngugi constructs a narrative that combines personal and collective struggles in the wake of colonial rule.

1. Historical, Political, and Social Dimensions in Ngugi's Work

The article "The Committed Artist: Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Social Vision," by Salituma Wamalwa, explores Ngugi's works after 1972, highlighting his shift from James Ngugi to Ngugi wa Thiong'o and his growing political activism. The article examines how Ngugi's works reflect his Marxist beliefs and commitment to social justice. Additionally, Wamalwa emphasizes Ngugi's belief in art as a collective expression of the people's struggles.

Ngugi's view of literature is profoundly intertwined with the historical experiences of both the writer and his community. He emphasizes understanding society as it currently exists while also envisioning what it could become. The idea of "art for art's sake" does not resonate with him at all. Even when he critiques literary works that might fit that mold, Ngugi aims to reveal the historical context and specific class consciousness that gave rise to them. In essence, much like Arnold Hauser, he sees the writer as shaped by their class, race, and nation (Wamalwa 11).

Literature cannot escape the influences of economics, politics, race, and class. In a society divided by class, literature has to take a stand. Ngugi believes that a writer's pen should not only mirror reality but also encourage readers to adopt a specific viewpoint toward that reality, whether directly or by shaping their imagination, emotions, and actions toward certain goals or values. According to Wamalwa, this understanding of a writer's role is heavily influenced by Frantz Fanon, as evident in the numerous quotes from his works that Ngugi incorporates in his own writings. In a published interview, Ngugi points out that many African writers find their creative inspiration in the challenges Fanon discusses. He argues that practical criticism should also emerge from this perspective on the writer's work, along with a deep understanding of the challenges faced by those striving for self-realization as a community (12).

The author highlights Ngugi's deep exploration of repression in neocolonial Kenya in *Barrel of a Pen* and *Detained*. In these works, Ngugi exposes government actions that conflict with the benefits of workers and peasants, highlighting the consequences faced by writers and politicians who bravely express their opinions (13).

Similarly, in “Ngugi wa Thiong’o and the Writing of Kenyan History,” Carol Sicherman examined Ngugi’s steady commitment to social justice and his critical perspective on the dynamics of the state in the post-colonial era. She discussed how his work challenges the failures of the post-independence Kenyan state, particularly in addressing issues of inequality and cultural alienation. Sicherman views Ngugi as a literary activist who uses fiction to challenge oppressive forms and promote social transformation.

Ngugi's early works, such as *The River Between* (1965) and *Weep Not, Child* (1964), were written during his undergraduate years and reflect a nationalist enthusiasm. However, his later works, including *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), *Petals of Blood* (1977), and *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (1976), show a more profound political awareness. Sicherman highlights Ngugi's revision of *A Grain of Wheat* and his change of the term “the party” to “the movement,” which reflects his disillusionment with the Kenyan African National Union (KANU). Additionally, Ngugi corrected a historical detail concerning the number of demonstrators killed in 1922, changing it from 15 to 150 (347-49).

Additionally, Sicherman points out that Ngugi's writings are rich in references to historical figures and events, particularly evident in the novel *Petals of Blood*. Sicherman states: “From the beginning Ngugi deliberately mixed fictional names with those of historical characters, hoping to heighten the illusion of fictional ‘reality.’” For instance, in *A Grain of Wheat*, Ngugi includes historical figures like Jomo Kenyatta and Waiyaki, noting that their mention is inevitable due to their significance in Kenyan history (350).

Ngugi's choice to write in Gikuyu illustrates his dedication to connect with a wider Kenyan audience, especially the peasants and workers. This language shift is a thoughtful approach to engage more intimately with the very people whose stories he wants to share. After finishing *Petals of Blood* in October 1975, Ngugi made the decision to create his literary works in Gikuyu. This choice was shaped by his experience collaborating with Kamiriithu peasants on his first Gikuyu project, which allowed him to relearn his language and rediscover the innovative spirit and strength of united efforts. By using Gikuyu, Ngugi seeks to foster a direct conversation with peasants and workers. He feels this change enables him to write not just about them, but also for them (364-65).

Simona Klimkova's "History and Fiction: Ngugi wa Thiong'o's vision" explores the relationship between fiction and history in Ngugi's novel *A Grain of Wheat*. The author highlights how post-colonial literary works engage with the history of colonialism and post-independence sufferings. Post-colonial authors used fiction as a tool to achieve political activism, foster national consciousness, and challenge colonialist discourse. Klimkova engages with Nadine Gordimer's perspective, which suggests that politics are not an intrusion in African literature, but an inescapable force in shaping its narrative (155).

The author examines Ngugi's belief in the African writer's responsibility to address and react to social, political, and economic issues of their country in their writings. Ngugi believes that a writer's most important subject in literature is history. Therefore, it is the writers' duty to challenge misrepresentations of colonized nations and their history, presented in the colonialist discourse. That being said, Ngugi contends that the writer's deep involvement in a specific socio-political context affects his ability to remain neutral, which, according to him, is ultimately unnecessary. Rather, the writer's social duties call for a distinct expression of his perspective (156).

Finally, Klimkova highlights Ngugi's idea that history is open to reinterpretation, which leads him to critically reassess and redefine Kenyan history from his own perspective, thereby challenging colonial narratives (160).

According to Angela Downing, contemporary African Anglophone literature explores the impact of Western civilization on traditional life, with writers aiming to celebrate and reinstate the value of their native cultures while navigating the challenges of using a European language and literary form. Ngugi's aim, through his writings, is to tell the story of the Gikuyu people, focusing on their loss of land, traditions, and beliefs due to colonialism.

Downing depicts Ngugi's thematic progression across his novels. His first written novel, the second to be published, *The River Between* (1965) portrays a potentially idealized view of the Gikuyu lifestyle when they first encountered European civilization through Christian missions. His next novel *Weep Not, Child* (1964) tackled the themes of land dispossession and the struggle for independence; here the conflict is not only about culture but primarily a fight for political freedom tied to reclaiming their land. In his third novel *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), Kenya is now on the verge of gaining independence. The anticipated celebration reveals feelings of guilt over past actions during the emergency, and social classes begin to emerge in Gikuyu society. Subsequently, *Petals of Blood* (1977) depicts the aftermath of Kenya's independence, emphasizing the extreme drought resulting from the extensive deforestation carried out by the British and the struggling against a new oppressive alliance of foreign interests and a wealthy African elite, contrasting sharply with their initial hopes for a brighter future after independence.

Finally, the article emphasizes Ngugi's ongoing experimentation in blending his themes with the English language. "At his best, he achieves a language which does not stray too far from Standard, but far enough to be personal and to evoke an alien rhythm and structure" (Downing 85).

2. A Review of Narrative Techniques and Psychological Dimensions in *A Grain of Wheat*

Ngugi uses various literary devices to enhance the thematic and emotional depth of *A Grain of Wheat*. In his article “Stylistic/Textual Analysis of Narrative Techniques in Ngugi Wa Thiong’o’s *A Grain of Wheat*,” Dr. Ben-Fred Ohia explores Ngugi’s command of the English language and the diverse narrative techniques he incorporates in his novels. The study applies post-colonial theory to examine the impact of colonialism on Kenya's environment, focusing on how Ngugi's storytelling techniques expose these effects.

The author attributes much of *A Grain of Wheat*’s appeal to Ngugi’s skillful use of various literary devices such as flashbacks, symbolism, characterization, and personification. According to Ohia, these narrative techniques play an important role in drawing the reader into the novel and deepening thematic expression. He also highlights the significance of the omniscient narrator, which allows for an objective exploration of the deepest aspects of the characters and their psychological and emotional states (52).

Ohia presents existing criticisms of Ngugi's use of weak characters, arguing that Ngugi's choice is intentional and unique. He writes: “His use of weak heroes is a deliberate artistic skill and peculiar style to show his belief in the African socialist doctrine of non-heroic figure for society but that heroism belongs to the people – the masses; which completely negates the Aristotelian concept of hero of the special class” (56).

In the same vein, in “The Structure of Symbolism in *A Grain of Wheat*,” Bu-Buakei Jabbi argues that symbolism has a great functional importance in the long narratives of Ngugi wa Thiong’o. He highlights how it plays a central role in structuring the narrative and giving more depth to the themes of the text. He analyzes Ngugi’s literary symbolism using different

analytical concepts. Jabbi examined both minor and major symbols found in *A Grain of Wheat*, offering an in-depth reading of how these symbols are interwoven with the narrative and character development.

In his article “In-Between Culture in Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s *A Grain of Wheat*,” İlkey Ağır analyzes the novel through a post-colonial theoretical framework. The author relies mainly on Bhabha’s concept of the “in-between” to examine how the clash between the culture of the colonized and the colonizers leads to the creation of an in-between culture. The author emphasizes that while the interaction between the colonizers and the colonized people lays the groundwork for the emergence of this hybrid space, rebellion acts as a driving force for its development, as it intensifies the interaction between the two sides (66). Finally, the author states that *A Grain of Wheat* presents decolonization as an unfinished process. While the characters gain political independence, they continue to struggle with the lasting effects of colonialism, which shapes a hybrid identity rather than a return to a purely indigenous culture (72-73).

In another article entitled “How Ngugi Wa Thiong’o Shifted from Class Analysis to a Neo-Colonialist Perspective,” Josef Gugler explores Ngugi’s ideological shift throughout his writing career, from a class-based analysis to a more pronounced neo-colonialist critique. Following his initial three novels, *Weep Not Child*, *The River Between*, and *A Grain of Wheat*, Ngugi took a decade-long break from writing, during which he changed his name from James Ngugi to Ngugi wa Thiong’o, a change that reflected his evolving ideological shift (Gugler 329).

Gugler highlights how Ngugi’s early novels addressed the Mau Mau Rebellion from 1952 to 1958. His novel *A Grain of Wheat* (1967) portrays independence as a new beginning, conveying a message of reconciliation which can be achieved through the understanding that no one is without fault and that the emerging elite are the common enemy of the people. However,

Petals of Blood (1977), published ten years after *A Grain of Wheat*, depicts Kenya's post-independence reality as one of betrayal, corruption, and unfulfilled promises. In this novel, Ngugi shows how exploitation already existed before colonialism, but worsened under British rule. *Petals of Blood* (1977) critiques Kenya's post-independence leadership, showing how political elites become corrupt and exploit the masses (329-32).

Ngugi was detained few months after his novel's publication due to his involvement in theater performances in Gikuyu, which directly reached and engaged the common people. While the government tolerated his critiques in English, it considered his use of the local language as a greater threat, fearing it could mobilize the masses against them. Later, while in prison, he wrote his next novel, *Devil on the Cross*, in the Gikuyu language (333). Gugler highlights how the novel portrays the persistence of social and economic injustices, emphasizing how the ruling class maintains power through oppression and violence while the marginalized struggle for resistance and change. Ngugi presents a clear critique of Kenya's economic structure, highlighting its domination by foreign powers and the complicity of the national bourgeoisie. The shift between both novels relies in how Ngugi portrays the Kenyan bourgeoisie. In *Petals of Blood*, the Kenyan elites appear to be the main problem, while in *Devil on the Cross*, Ngugi argues that these elites are just tools of foreign powers, emphasizing that the real issue is neo-colonialism (336-37).

Similarly, the article "Post-Independent Kenya in Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* and *Petals of Blood*: A Neo-Colonial Study" by Most. Umme Atia Khatun explores how Ngugi wa Thiong'o's novels, particularly *A Grain of Wheat*, critique the persistence of neocolonialism in post-independence Kenya. The research highlights how Kenya, despite achieving independence from British colonial rule, remained subjected to a new kind of exploitation led by local elites who replaced the former colonizers.

The author examined how the portrayal of collaborators like Karanja and members of the black bourgeoisie, such as the MP replacing former colonizers, effectively reflect the true essence of neocolonialism. Karanja represents the elite who sided with the British during the colonial period at the expense of his community. The author highlighted how Ngugi illustrates the process of neocolonialism by tracing Karanja's rise to power as a chief, supported by the colonial rule to sustain a disguised form of colonial control in post-independence Kenya (Khatun 147). Khatun states "Kenya gets its independence only in appearance but in reality things have not changed. Only the elites replaced the colonial oppressors. The marginalization of the masses continues" (148). The article concludes that Ngugi's novels offer a strong critique of neocolonialism, revealing how the new ruling class betrayed the promises of independence.

Another study by Sanjeev Kumar has been conducted about the novel in the context of the Mau-Mau revolt and the Kenya Emergency. His article "Fragmenting and Disrupting Gikuyu Society: A Study of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *A Grain of Wheat*" highlights Ngugi's novel exploration of imperial policies' disruption of pre-colonial social and cultural cohesion. The article examines how Ngugi's work reflects the collective revolutionary actions taken by young people to achieve cultural and political decolonization and the devastating effects of the Emergency, as portrayed through the suffering of the Thabai community.

Additionally, the author highlights the role of Mugo's traumatic childhood in shaping his response and perception of social relationships, evident in his need to be left alone. Ultimately, his need to be isolated from his community led to his betrayal of Kihika. According to Kumar, Mugo's confession stems from his need to connect with his community, and despite of his treachery which is unforgivable, Mugo's death brings a sense of dignity and honor, both to himself and to his community (Kumar 279).

In her chapter “Heroism in *A Grain of Wheat*,” Eileen Julien examined the concept of heroism as portrayed by Ngugi wa Thiong'o in the novel. She explains that Kihika's character represents the traditional notion of heroism by means of his beliefs, ideals and physical bravery (Julien 138-39). On the other hand, she argues that the character of Mugo, as depicted in the novel, gives another dimension to heroism which is not specifically about achieving something great but rather about the inner struggles and conflicts of the individual. Mugo's heroism is depicted through facing his moral battles, seeking the truth about himself, confessing his betrayal, and consequently, being responsible for his actions (142-43).

Another significant study is an article entitled “An Exploration of the Theme of Guilt and Redemption in *The Guide* by R.K.Narayan and *A Grain of Wheat* by Ngugi wa Thiong'o” authored by Sarala Krishnamurthy. It explores the theme of guilt and redemption as they manifest in the two main protagonists from a different perspective. She draws a parallel between the protagonists of both stories, arguing that they deceived their people by projecting themselves as heroes, while they fall far short of this ideal. She views them as ordinary characters who won the respect of their society due to a misunderstanding and instead of revealing the truth, they let this misconception persist because it benefits them (Krishnamurthy 105).

However, Krishnamurthy emphasizes that Mugo's eventual confession of his betrayal during Uhuru day serves as a pivotal moment of redemption, not only for himself but also for the broader community. This act catalyzes reconciliation among other characters, such as Mumbi and Gikonyo, and stresses the restorative power of confronting one's guilt (108). Krishnamurthy, through a post-colonial lens, emphasizes how Mugo's journey captures the complexities of moral accountability and the process of communal healing in post-colonial societies.

In line with the previous study, in Kenneth Harrow's work "Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *A Grain of Wheat*: Season of Irony," Mugo is portrayed as a deeply conflicted and complex character whose actions are deeply influenced by guilt and isolation following his betrayal of Kihika, a revolutionary hero. This guilt serves as a central theme, driving Mugo's behavior (Harrow 246). Harrow emphasizes how Mugo's inner turmoil is mirrored in his interactions with others and the environment, particularly through rain imagery that symbolizes his emotional struggle. His journey from concealment to public confession captures the broader consequences of betrayal and the haunting weight of the past.

Mugo's interactions with Mumbi, who embodies hope and redemption, challenge him to confront his guilt and strive for reconciliation. Ultimately, his arc reflects not only the personal ramifications of historical events but also the complexities of Kenya's independence struggle, with Mugo standing as a tragic figure caught between his inner darkness and the possibility of redemption.

In a similar vein, Léon Mugesera's article entitled "Guilt and Redemption in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *A Grain of Wheat*" analyses the themes of betrayal, guilt and redemption in the novel. The work shows how these themes are used by Ngugi to express the inner struggles of his characters and the psychological wound left by colonialism. The author states that guilt and redemption are the focal themes of the novel and seeks to analyse different characters' behaviors through a psychological point of view. He uses Freudian concepts of the id, ego and super-ego to explain how guilt arises and how characters strive for redemption.

Mugo's id represents his primal desires and instincts, which are primarily focused on self-preservation and isolation. His id drives him to avoid involvement in the political struggle for Kenyan independence, as he believes that staying out of trouble will keep him safe. When Kihika, a Mau Mau leader, seeks refuge in his hut, Mugo's ego is forced to confront a dilemma:

helping Kihika would put his life at risk, but betraying him would violate his moral conscience. The ego struggles to balance these conflicting demands, but in the end, the Id wins, as Mugo's instinct for self-preservation leads him to betray Kihika (Mugesera 219-20).

After his treachery, Mugo is consumed by guilt, as his super-ego punishes him for his moral failure. Ultimately, Mugo's guilt reaches its peak and he admits to betraying Kihika, revealing his guilt to the entire village. This confession redeems him psychologically and allows him to regain his inner peace, even though it leads to his death (221-22). Mugesera concludes that Ngugi's novel is not just a historical account of Kenya's independence but a psychological exploration of guilt and redemption (231).

Conclusion

This literature review demonstrates that previous studies have examined the contrasting forms of heroism in the novel as well as the broader implications of guilt and redemption within the context of colonial and post-colonial Kenya. They also analyzed Ngugi's literary symbolism in the novel. In addition, they used Freudian theory to analyze how guilt emerges and how the characters seek redemption. However, none of these studies has applied Jungian analytical psychology to analyze the deeper, unconscious dimensions of Mugo's guilt. By exploring Jungian concepts of the unconscious, the shadow, persona, and individuation, this research seeks to uncover how Mugo's internal conflict reflects his struggles with guilt, identity, and self-realization. This approach offers a comprehensive understanding of guilt and redemption as psychological processes, shedding light on the internal conflicts that shape Mugo's personal transformation.

Chapter 2. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Introduction

Psychoanalytic theory was developed by the Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It explores how the unconscious mind often influences human behaviors, which Freud argued is largely shaped by early childhood experiences. He believed that the mind is divided into conscious and unconscious realms, with the unconscious holding hidden desires, fears, and memories.

Drawing on psychoanalytic principles to interpret literary texts, psychoanalytic literary criticism emerged in the early 20th century. It explores how the unconscious mind influences the author's work, the readers' reactions, and most commonly, the characters' behaviors and motivations in fictional works.

1. Freud's Contributions to Psychoanalytic Theory

In 1899, Freud published one of his most influential works, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, wherein he examined the significance of dreams in revealing the hidden contents of the unconscious mind. He says, "The interpretation of dreams is the royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious activities of the mind" (Freud *Interpretation* 604). Freud

contends that certain thoughts are pushed into the unconscious mind to protect the conscious self through a defense mechanism he terms repression. Consequently, dreams allow these repressed thoughts and feelings to resurface in a disguised form (183). Furthermore, he distinguishes between two types of dream content: manifest content and latent content. The former consists of the actual events and images in the dream, whereas the latter holds the deeper, symbolic meaning concealed beneath the surface. He emphasizes that the true significance of a dream lies in its latent content, which can be uncovered through the process of dream analysis (295).

This is also where Freud first elaborates on the topographical model of the mind, in which he delineates the psyche into three distinct realms: the unconscious, the preconscious, and the conscious. He posits that not all mental content outside of conscious awareness is the same. Some material is deeply repressed and inaccessible, constituting the unconscious. While other content resides just beneath awareness and can be readily recalled, which Freud terms the preconscious (609). Freud designates the final system, located at the motor end, as the preconscious. He describes it as a system in which mental excitations are capable of entering consciousness without obstruction, assuming certain conditions are met. Preceding this, he identifies a deeper system, which is the unconscious. The unconscious lacks direct access to consciousness; rather, its content must first pass the preconscious, during which process they are subject to transformation before potentially emerging into conscious awareness (542-43). However, consciousness comprises only a small portion of the mind (607) and, according to Freud, functions primarily as a passive recipient of mental content, similar to a sense organ that simply receives and observes internal processes without exerting control (610).

In *The Ego and the Id* (1923), Freud first introduced his structural model of the psyche, consisting of the id, ego, and superego, as a development of his earlier topographical model presented in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899). In 1933, he revisited this theory in *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, where he explains the functions and relationships between these three parts. Starting off with the id, Freud describes it as a mysterious, inaccessible part of the mind. It is a storehouse of instinctual desires, driven by the pleasure principle, which strives for immediate satisfaction (Freud *New Introductory* 98). According to Freud, the id neither adheres to logic nor possesses an awareness of time (99). The ego develops later from the id, shaped by the influences of the real world (100). It is the rational part of the mind, which mediates between the id's urges and external realities (101). On the other hand, the superego originates from internalized parental authority. However, it tends to emphasize only its punitive aspects, excluding their nurturing care (85). Thus, the superego is often perceived as the strict part of the mind, which strives for perfection regardless of external circumstances and the persistent pressures of the id (104). Caught between the id, superego, and external reality, the ego constantly struggles to maintain balance. When subjected to intense pressure from these three forces, it reacts with extreme anxiety (103).

Freud also revised his earlier theory of repression and anxiety. Contrary to his previous belief that repression causes anxiety, Freud asserts that "It is not the repression that creates the anxiety, but the anxiety is there first and creates the repression" (113). This happens because the ego represses thoughts and desires that could lead to dangerous consequences (117). Freud describes anxiety as a warning signal that alerts the ego to potential threats, which helps it take defensive actions, such as repression or other

mechanisms (112). However, this does not remove the desire entirely; it remains in the unconscious and may resurface in different forms, such as symptoms or phobias (118).

While Freud established the foundation of psychoanalytic theory, several of his contemporaries and successors developed alternative perspectives that both built upon and diverged from his original ideas. These post-Freudian theorists, sometimes referred to as neo-Freudians, maintained the importance of unconscious processes and early childhood experiences but shifted emphasis from biological and instinctual determinants to social, cultural, and interpersonal factors in psychological development.

2. Post-Freudian Perspectives

2.1 Alfred Adler

Alfred Adler (1870-1937) was among the first of Freud's colleagues to break away and establish his own school of thought, which he called Individual Psychology (Ansbacher and Ansbacher 3). Adler diverged from Freudian theory in 1911, rejecting the primacy of sexual drives and developing a more socially oriented approach (9).

Unlike Freud, who believes that human behaviors are motivated by sexual and aggressive drives, Adler suggests that the fundamental human motivation is a striving for superiority or perfection (2, 4). This motivational force, Adler states, is innate to human existence. He says: "The striving for perfection is innate in the sense that it is a part of life, a striving, an urge, a something without which life would be unthinkable" (Adler 104).

According to him, this urge for perfection stems from childhood feelings of inferiority and dependency, which naturally propel individuals toward growth and

development (115-16). However, when these feelings become exaggerated, they may develop into an inferiority complex, which is often compensated by a superiority complex through which “the individual demonstrates to himself and others his personal superiority, albeit in a socially useless way” (257). This dialectical relationship between inferiority and superiority forms the core of Adler’s understanding of human motivation and personality development.

Adler's theory also emphasizes the significance of social interest, a concept in Adlerian psychology that refers to a person's inherent ability to cooperate with others and develop a feeling of belonging within his community (134-35). He argues that humans are fundamentally social beings whose psychological development cannot be understood outside their social context, stating that “human psychological life cannot be understood without the simultaneous consideration of these coherences” (127-28). By “coherences,” Adler refers to the social and institutional connections that shape a person's mental life. He establishes that humans, as inherently weak creatures compared to other animals, developed communal living as a necessity for survival through the division of labor and cooperation. According to him, man “is not strong enough to live alone. He has only little resistance against nature, he needs a larger amount of aids to live and preserve himself” (129).

This social nature manifests in three interconnected life tasks: occupation, social relationships, and love. Each of these can only be successfully addressed through cooperation with others (131). Social interest develops from an innate potential, but it must be nurtured by upbringing and education (134). When fully developed, it enables individuals to contribute meaningfully to society’s welfare while simultaneously addressing their feelings of inferiority through useful actions. Adler views social interest as the primary measure of mental health, with psychological problems invariably stemming from its underdevelopment (155-56).

Adler also believed that even if children are born and raised in the same household, it is a misconception to assume that they grow up in a seemingly identical environment. While they may share many similarities, each child's psychological experience is unique and shaped by their position within the birth order (376). He argues that it is not the child's rank in the birth order that shapes his personality, as is often mistakenly assumed, but rather “the situation into which he is born and the way in which he interprets it” (377). In other words, Adler emphasizes that children’s position in the family affects how they perceive their surroundings, how they are treated, and ultimately how their personality develops, making their psychological situation distinct from that of their siblings.

2.2 Erik Erikson

Erik Erikson's psychosocial model complements Freud's theory of psychosexuality. Rather than rejecting Freud's ideas, Erikson sought to build upon and expand them. While Freud emphasizes unconscious sexual drives in early childhood as the main forces shaping personality, Erikson shifts the focus to the ego's relationship with society and the development of identity across the entire lifespan (Erikson *Life Cycle* 15-16). Thus, he extends the scope of personality development beyond childhood to include adolescence, adulthood, and old age, thereby creating a comprehensive life cycle model (8-9). Erikson's approach is epigenetic, meaning that each stage builds upon previous stages while laying the foundation for those that follow, resulting in an interconnected developmental sequence (59-60).

This model of development unfolds across eight distinct stages during the individual's lifespan. At each psychosocial stage, individuals experience a core crisis, a conflict between

two opposing forces, such as trust and mistrust (a positive trait and its negative counterpart). Resolving this crisis leads to “the emergence of a basic strength or ego quality.” Erikson highlights that for every positive quality or strength that emerges through resolving a psychosocial crisis (like hope or wisdom), there is always a potential negative counterpart that can arise (80).

He emphasizes that development is not linear or permanently achieved, positive traits like trust can be challenged later in life, just as early unresolved conflicts can resurface. Thus, development is a lifelong process, shaped by ongoing interactions between inner potentials and external conditions (Erikson *childhood* 274).

In *Childhood and Society*, Erikson explains that the central challenge in infancy is basic trust versus mistrust, where the child learns whether the world is safe and reliable. During this stage, trust is mainly developed through consistent and sensitive caregiving. Erikson explains, “The infant’s first social achievement, then, is his willingness to let the mother out of sight without undue anxiety, or rage, because she has become an inner certainty as well as an outer predictability” (247). The absence of such trust manifests in cases of infantile schizophrenia. It frequently continues into adulthood, resulting in individuals who tend to withdraw into schizoid and depressive states (248). During early childhood, the infant strives for autonomy and self-control (251). Success during this stage of psychosocial development leads to the development of will. Otherwise, the child may experience feelings of shame and doubt (255).

The third stage of psychosocial development takes place during the preschool years. During this stage, the child begins to plan, act, and imagine. If this initiative is encouraged, he develops purpose and direction; however, if it’s overly restricted or punished, the child may begin to experience guilt (255-56, 274). In the fourth psychosocial stage, which takes

place during the early school years, the child learns to be productive and accomplish tasks. Success leads to a sense of competence, while repeated failure may produce feelings of inferiority (258-60, 274). The fifth psychosocial stage takes place during the often turbulent teenage years. It revolves around the adolescents' struggle to form a cohesive sense of self by integrating past experiences, social roles, and future aspirations. Failing to do so leads to confusion about one's place in society (61-62).

In young adulthood, individuals seek deep connections and intimacy with others. Achieving this leads to the virtue of love, while avoiding it creates isolation and emotional distance (263-64, 274). Later, Adults focus on guiding the next generation; failure to do so leads to self-absorption and stagnation (267). In the final stage, individuals reflect on their lives, either achieving a sense of integrity by accepting their past or falling into fear of death and despair over missed opportunities (268-69).

2.3 Melanie Klein

Melanie Klein (1882–1960) was another psychoanalyst who expanded on Freud's theories, especially in the area of child psychology. She is best known for her work on object relations theory, which explores how early relationships, especially with caregivers, shape an individual's inner world.

In "Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanism," Melanie Klein introduces foundational ideas in psychoanalysis, particularly regarding object relations and early defensive mechanisms. Melanie Klein's theory of object relations posits that infants establish relationships with objects from the beginning of life, initially the mother's breast, which they perceive as either good or bad depending on whether it satisfies or frustrates their needs, leading to a separation of love and hate emotions. This relation to the first object is shaped by

introjection and projection processes, which help shape the developing ego and superego, and they establish the psychological groundwork for the emergence of the Oedipus complex in the second half of the first year (Klein 99).

As the infant matures, they enter the depressive position, where the good and bad aspects of the object are more nuanced and integrated, leading to feelings of mourning, guilt, and a more realistic perception of the object. This developmental shift is crucial for the infant's emotional and intellectual growth, setting the stage for more mature object relations and the resolution of psychotic anxieties. As Klein states: “it makes for an increased understanding of psychic reality and better perception of the external world, as well as for a greater synthesis between inner and external situations” (105). However, when the infant is unable to fully manage the depressive position, it can result in regression, reinforcing earlier defenses and complicating emotional development (105).

3. Carl Jung’s Analytical Psychology

Carl Jung, a pioneering figure in the field of analytical psychology, is inextricably linked to Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis. Their relationship, which began with intense collaboration and mutual admiration, ultimately ended in a bitter falling out that continues to captivate scholars and the public alike (Falzeder 24). Jung was initially drawn to Freud's serious approach to psychical phenomena and his focus on the unconscious. Nonetheless, significant theoretical disparities were evident from the outset as Jung rejected Freud's sexual theory and the method of free association (32). He viewed dreams as direct, undistorted emanations from the unconscious, expressed in symbols, and introduced the concept of “active imagination” to interpret them (28).

Jung's pioneering contributions to psychoanalysis, particularly in the areas of psychosis and the compensatory function of the unconscious, laid the groundwork for later psychoanalytic thought. Along with Eugen Bleuler and other collaborators at the Burghölzli, Jung was among the first to investigate psychoses from a psychoanalytic viewpoint. This was a groundbreaking effort, as psychotic cases were largely absent from Freud's and his followers' practices in Vienna, which primarily focused on neuroses and psychosomatic disorders (30-31).

Understanding Jung's extensive impact on the realm of psychology requires insight into his interpretation of the psyche. Originally, the term psyche referred to the soul or spirit, but by the early 20th century, it began to shift towards meaning mind. In Jungian psychology, one's psyche can be seen as their total personality. It includes all their thoughts, behaviors, feelings, and emotions. Jung divided the psyche into three main realms: the conscious, the personal unconscious, and the collective unconscious.

At the center of the field of consciousness lies the ego, which Jung describes as "the complex factor to which all conscious contents are related." It functions as the subject through which all conscious acts are carried out. According to Jung, the way a psychic content relates to the ego determines its consciousness, since nothing can be conscious unless it is recognized by a subject. Jung explains that while consciousness has no theoretical boundaries, since it can expand endlessly, it is practically limited by what remains unknown. This unknown is divided into two categories: external objects that can be perceived through the senses, and internal experiences that are directly felt but not accessible to the ego. The latter category constitutes the unconscious (Jung *Aion* 17-18).

The unconscious is divided into two main parts: the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious. The personal unconscious is made up of two types of content. First, it

includes all those thoughts and memories that slipped away from awareness, whether repressed or merely forgotten. Second, it contains various sense impressions that never quite had enough impact to reach the conscious mind but still managed to find their way into the psyche. On the other hand, the collective unconscious contains impersonal and universal elements, psychic structures shared by all humans (Jung *Structure and Dynamics* 203-04).

One way the personal unconscious exerts its influence on behavior is through what Jung identified as complexes. A complex is a cluster of emotionally charged ideas or images that behave like independent entities within the psyche (135). Jung states: “Everyone knows nowadays that people “have complexes.” What is not so well known, though far more important theoretically, is that complexes can have us” (134). Therefore, these complexes can disrupt our conscious thoughts and behaviors, showing a surprising level of autonomy and often resisting efforts to be assimilated or suppressed by the conscious mind. He further explains that “The complex can usually be suppressed with an effort of will, but not argued out of existence, and at the first suitable opportunity it reappears in all its original strength” (135).

While the personal unconscious contains material shaped by individual experience, the collective unconscious is composed of innate archetypal elements that have existed since the beginning (Jung *Aion* 24). These elements manifest as recurrent motifs in mythology, religion, and art, and are recognized across disciplines under terms like “représentations collectives” and “categories of the imagination” (Jung *Portable Jung* 60). Archetypes function as instinctual patterns that shape perception and behavior. Activated by common life experiences, they can exert a powerful, often unconscious influence that may override rational thought. When left unintegrated, they can lead to neuroses (62, 67).

The shadow is the most accessible part of the collective unconscious and is easier to experience than other archetypes like the anima and animus. Although it belongs to the realm of archetypes, its specific content is largely influenced by the personal unconscious, namely, the traits and experiences that an individual has rejected or repressed throughout their life. In most cases, these are negative qualities, though in rare instances, repressed positive aspects may also be included. Jung describes the shadow as a moral problem that confronts the whole ego, as recognizing and accepting the shadow requires a conscious acknowledgment of the darker, less desirable aspects of one's personality. This process demands significant moral effort and often meets inner resistance, yet it is a vital step toward genuine self-knowledge (Jung *Aion* 24).

Jung describes the persona as a social mask or role that an individual presents to the outside world, shaped by societal expectations and personal choices. It represents “a compromise between individual and society as to what a man should appear to be.” This mask can be seen as a two-dimensional reality, a semblance that often hides the essential individuality of the person (Jung *Two Essays* 216-17). It is, as Jung explains, designed to create a specific impression on others while simultaneously hiding one's true self. He warns that someone who is too identified with their persona may lose touch with their true self, while someone unaware of others' personas may misunderstand human nature (264).

In his book titled *Two Essays in Analytical Psychology*, Jung views the dream as a messenger from the unconscious:

It is only in modern times that the dream, this fleeting and insignificant looking product of the psyche, has met with such profound contempt. Formerly it was esteemed as a harbinger of fate, a portent and comforter, a

messenger of the gods. Now we see it as the emissary of the unconscious, whose task it is to reveal the secrets that are hidden from the conscious mind, and this it does with astounding completeness. (43)

In this view, dreams reveal secrets and hidden aspects of the psyche that are not accessible to the conscious mind. They offer a remarkably comprehensive picture of unconscious processes, shedding light on repressed emotions, unresolved conflicts, and deeper psychological dynamics. For Jung, dreams should be interpreted on the subjective level, wherein all dream figures are regarded as personified components of the dreamer's own psyche (*Structure and Dynamics* 346-47). The unconscious produces symbolic content that can have either healing or destructive impacts, depending on how it is integrated. Therefore, the meaningful interpretation of these symbols is essential for understanding the psychological significance of dreams (Jung *Man and His Symbols* 160).

Jung observed that these dreams are not random; rather, they follow a meaningful psychological pattern that he terms "the process of individuation," which refers to the journey toward becoming one's true self. Although individual dreams may seem disconnected, consistent observation over time reveals recurring symbols, figures, and themes that undergo gradual transformation. According to Jung, these developments reflect the psyche's progression toward psychological wholeness and can be consciously influenced through the thoughtful interpretation of symbolic content (Jung *Man and His Symbols* 160).

The process of assimilating the unconscious involves bringing unconscious contents into consciousness, which can lead to significant psychological changes. This assimilation can result in a phenomenon called inflation, where the ego identifies with the collective contents of the unconscious, leading to an exaggerated sense of self-importance or,

conversely, feelings of overwhelming inferiority. Inflation can manifest as arrogance and conceit, where the individual feels a godlike sense of power and knowledge, or as self-doubt and depression, where the individual feels crushed by the weight of the unconscious contents (Jung *Portable Jung* 83-86). This process highlights the delicate balance between the personal and collective aspects of the psyche and the importance of integrating unconscious materials in a way that promotes psychological growth rather than pathological inflation.

Jung states that “For the sake of mental stability and even physiological health, the unconscious and the conscious must be integrally connected and thus move on parallel lines. If they are split apart or ‘dissociated,’ psychological disturbance follows” (*Man and His Symbols* 52). This highlights the principle of individuation, which is the psychological process through which a person becomes a distinct and unified whole, a unique and integrated individual. (Jung *Archetypes* 275). He explains that the goal of individuation “is nothing less than to divest the self of the false wrappings of the persona on the one hand, and of the suggestive power of primordial images on the other” (Jung *Two Essays* 240).

Jung's ideas of guilt are deeply rooted in his understanding of the relationship between the ego and the shadow, as well as the process of individuation. He sees guilt not merely as a moral failing or social transgression, but as an intrinsic aspect of human existence that arises from the failure to respond to the call of the self, which embodies the potential for wholeness and self-realization. Jung posits that guilt arises from the tension between conforming to collective norms and pursuing individual authenticity. This tension underscores the challenge individuals face in balancing societal expectations with their personal aspirations and true self. According to Jung, there are two types of guilt: conventional guilt, which pulls individuals back into collective unconsciousness and adherence to societal expectations, and

a deeper, more existential guilt that stems from failing to realize one's inherent potential (Brooke 167-68).

Roger Brooke highlights that guilt is not initially experienced as a clear, reflective awareness of wrongdoing, but rather as a vague and embodied feeling. He explains that “guilt is always lived as an inarticulate, embodied feeling before it is understood and known reflectively, or consciously” (177). This means that guilt emerges first as an emotional or bodily discomfort before the individual becomes consciously aware of its cause. Such a structure makes the experience of unconscious guilt possible. According to Brooke, guilt becomes truly unconscious when there is a prolonged delay between the initial experience and the reflective understanding of it, especially when the individual “avoids knowing the guilt he has nevertheless appropriated” (177). In other words, even though the person is feeling guilty, they resist admitting or understanding the source of that feeling. This perspective provides a framework for understanding how guilt can shape a person’s inner life and behavior even when it remains unacknowledged on a conscious level.

Guilt manifests as a rupture between an individual's public persona and their private existence. This disjunction often leads to feelings of self-rejection, anxiety, and isolation, reflecting the internal conflict and disharmony experienced by the individual (177). The resolution of guilt involves confronting and addressing this existential rupture, often through processes such as confession, reparation, and self-forgiveness. These methods are essential for restoring internal harmony and integrity (178).

Conclusion

This chapter has provided the theoretical framework for the present study by tracing the development of psychoanalytic theory, beginning with Sigmund Freud's foundational concepts. It then examined the contributions of subsequent theorists who expanded upon or revised Freud's ideas, ultimately leading to Carl Jung's analytical psychology. Jung's theory offers a comprehensive lens for exploring how individuals often conceal their true inner selves behind socially constructed personas. This leads to internal conflict, which can only be resolved by accepting and integrating the hidden parts of the self into consciousness, achieving a sense of psychological wholeness. Therefore, by applying Jung's analytical theory to the character of Mugo, particularly his concepts of the shadow, persona, archetypes, and individuation, we can comprehensively analyze Mugo's inner conflicts, motivations, and psychological development throughout the novel.

Chapter 3. Mugo's Shadow and Individuation Process in *A Grain of Wheat*

Introduction

This chapter provides the historical and literary context of *A Grain of Wheat*, both of which are essential for understanding and analyzing the novel. It also includes a biography of the author, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and a description of the novel's main characters. In addition, the chapter discusses the novel's main themes: betrayal, guilt, and redemption, which are central to my analysis. This helps set the stage for the Jungian analysis that will follow in the same chapter. The study focuses on the character of Mugo and provides an understanding of his psychological state throughout the novel. It traces the development of his shadow, the clash between the shadow and the persona, the disintegration of the persona, and thus the process of individuation, albeit incomplete.

1. The Historical and Literary Background of the Novel

In order to understand the deeper meaning and purpose of the novel, it is necessary to present its historical and literary contexts. *A Grain of Wheat* explores the period leading to independence; however, it goes back in time to past events during the colonial period, particularly the State of Emergency. It reflects the harsh treatment of colonial powers toward the Kenyan people by illustrating the hardship faced by the villagers of Thabai. The literary context is also important because it helps understand the author's writing style and, in turn, deepens comprehension of the novel's themes. In addition, Ngugi's biography helps show how his beliefs, environment, and experiences influence his writings. *A Grain of Wheat* is a postcolonial novel that uses modernist techniques such as non-linear narrative style and multiple perspectives to depict the complex realities of the events and the inner states of the characters.

1.1 Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Biography

Ngugi wa Thiong'o, born in Limuru, Kenya, is recognized as one of Africa's leading novelists, cultural critics, and social thinkers. His literary career began with *Weep Not, Child* (1964) and includes a range of influential novels up to *Matigari* (1987), which address themes such as nationalism, acculturation, and the complex transition from colonial rule to postcolonial reality. Deeply influenced by Marxist and Fanonian thought as well as the Kenyan Mau Mau resistance, Ngugi developed a sharp critique of colonialism and Western hegemony (Pillay).

In the 1970s, his focus expanded to the dynamics between global capitalism and the local bourgeoisie in postcolonial states. During this period, he also advocated for an Africa-centered literary curriculum and became active in grassroots community theater, which led to his imprisonment by the Kenyan authorities. Upon his release in 1978, Ngugi resolved to write primarily in his native language, Gikuyu, arguing that African writers should embrace indigenous languages. He has consistently supported this view in essay collections such as *Decolonising the Mind*, *Moving the Centre*, and *Penpoints, Gunpoints and Dreams*, and through his creative works. Since the 1980s, Ngugi has lived in exile, continuing his academic and literary work across the United States, the United Kingdom, and Africa (Pillay).

Ngugi wa Thiong'o's early education played a foundational role in shaping his literary development. He began at Kamandura Primary School and later attended Maanguu Independent School, which emphasized African-centered education and instilled in him early awareness of colonial oppression (Abdullahi 39). His years at Alliance High School (1955–1959) were foundational to his growth as a writer. Though the school aimed to produce obedient colonial subjects, it offered Ngugi strong academic training, exposure to English literature, and leadership under Edward Carey Francis, who emphasized discipline and intellectual excellence (40-41).

Despite the benefits, Ngugi also faced harsh colonial contradictions, such as corporal punishment for speaking Kikuyu, which alienated students from their native culture and turned them into informers against their peers. Yet, Ngugi actively participated in literary and cultural activities, including debate and student publications. His early story, *My Childhood*, published during his school years, was altered to fit colonial Christian narratives, an experience he later critiqued as stifling his creative voice (42-43).

At Makerere University, Ngugi engaged with a British-centered syllabus that emphasized canonical English literature, yet he actively wrote and edited for various publications and participated in literary competitions. His interactions with other African writers, including Chinua Achebe at the 1962 writers' conference, were pivotal to his development as a writer (43, 45). Ngugi's time at Makerere provided both distance and perspective, enabling him to reflect on his Kenyan experience and write critically about colonialism (46).

At Leeds University, Ngugi encountered the ideas of Fanon and Marx, which replaced the Christian-colonial ideology he had absorbed at Alliance and Makerere. This shift in thinking was not entirely new to Ngugi, as the seeds of nationalist thought had already been planted during his time at the Gikuyu Independent School. Ngugi's time at Alliance High School and Makerere University College was pivotal in shaping his intellectual and literary journey. Each phase of his education significantly contributed to his development, equipping and motivating him to emerge as a prominent and impactful writer in the African literary world and beyond (46).

1.2 Historical Context

A Grain of Wheat (1967) powerfully describes Kenya's struggle for independence from British colonial rule. The novel centers on the events leading to Kenya's independence in 1963, particularly during the Mau Mau Uprising (1952–1960), a pivotal moment in the country's history. Kenya became a British colony in 1895 and was subject to strict colonial rule for several decades. British settlers seized large portions of the fertile highlands, displacing the native population and employing them at low wages to work on plantations.

This situation generated growing resentment among Kenyans, and from the 1940s, resistance to colonial rule began to intensify.

The Mau Mau uprising erupted in October 1952, led primarily by the Kikuyu community using secretive and militant methods, including sabotage and assassination. Though the true meaning of the term "Mau Mau" remains unclear, the group's rituals were linked to Jomo Kenyatta's Kikuyu Central Association. The British colonial government responded by declaring a state of emergency and imprisoning Kenyatta in 1953. While European casualties were limited, the rebellion led to thousands of deaths, mostly among the Mau Mau fighters and Kikuyu who opposed them. The conflict lasted until 1956, with the state of emergency remaining in effect until 1960 ("History of Kenya").

After the Mau Mau rebellion was suppressed, British authorities initiated constitutional reforms that eventually led to Kenya's independence. In 1960, African representatives gained majority status in the legislative council, and Jomo Kenyatta, released from detention in 1961, led the Kenya African National Union (KANU) through successful independence negotiations.

Kenya achieved full independence in 1963 with Kenyatta as prime minister, and became a republic the following year with him as president ("History of Kenya").

Kenya gained independence on December 12, 1963, with Jomo Kenyatta as its first prime minister. The post-independence period was marked by efforts to address ethnic and economic inequalities. Kenyatta's government focused on redistributing land and improving living standards, but challenges remained, including corruption and ethnic tensions. Kenyatta's successor, Daniel arap Moi, initially continued Kenyatta's policies but gradually centralized power, favored his own ethnic group, and suppressed dissent. In 1982, Kenya became officially a one-party state, and a coup attempt was suppressed. Opposition figures

like Odinga and student activists faced censorship and repression. Moi maintained Western alliances and benefited from foreign aid. However, international pressure led to the return of multiparty democracy in 1991. The opposition remained fragmented, enabling Moi to win reelection in 1992 and 1997 despite allegations of corruption and electoral manipulation. By the late 1990s, Moi attempted to improve his image by appointing reformers like Richard Leakey to high positions, signaling a commitment to tackling corruption (“Republic of Kenya”).

1.3 An Overview of the Main Characters in the Novel

In this novel, Ngugi wanted to examine the fragility of human life through the portrayal of the inner lives of the characters and their psychological state. Mugo, Kihika, Gikonyo, Mumbi, and Karanja are the five principal characters of the narrative.

Although Kihika's appearance in the novel is somewhat limited compared to the other characters, he plays a significant role both in the revolution and in Mugo's life. He is celebrated as a hero of the Gikuyu due to his resilience, courage, and significant role within the Mau Mau Freedom Fighters. Kihika is greatly influenced by Christianity and believes in the necessity of bloodshed and sacrifice to achieve independence. He kills District Officer Thomas Robson and takes shelter in Mugo's hut; however, he is later captured and executed.

Mugo is an orphan living with his cruel, elderly aunt. She is an alcoholic who frequently belittles and mistreats him. He grows up as an isolated individual who keeps himself detached from the world around him and the struggles of his community. He dreams of working the land and achieving success and wealth, hoping this will earn him recognition from society. Nonetheless, Mugo does not share the same beliefs as Kihika. He is disturbed

by Kihika's views and often questions who has given him the right to make such statements as he listens to his speeches encouraging the villagers to fight and resist colonial oppression. Mugo secretly hates and despises Kihika, although nothing happens between them at the novel's beginning. He is jealous of him due to his feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. While he seems isolated and calm, deep down, Mugo is tormented by feelings of guilt and betrayal.

Mumbi, Gikonyo, Kihika, and Karanja share a close friendship before the Emergency disrupts their lives. Both Karanja and Gikonyo have feelings for Mumbi, yet she chooses Gikonyo. After the death of Kihika and the arrest of Mugo and Gikonyo, Karanja joins the British colonial forces. He betrays his community to protect himself from the white man and to stay close to Mumbi. Karanja shows no mercy to the people of his village, enjoying his power and authority over them. While Gikonyo is still in detention, Mumbi betrays him with Karanja and bears his child. Although Mumbi regrets her actions, Gikonyo initially cannot forgive her or accept the child. He is devastated by Mumbi's and Karanja's betrayal. At the same time, he feels ashamed because he betrayed the oath to return to Mumbi, only to find her raising another man's child. However, he later forgives her, moved by Mugo's public confession of his betrayal and the realization that they all made mistakes, and that none of them is in a position to hold Mugo accountable.

1.4 Central Themes in the Novel

A Grain of Wheat explores the inner lives of individuals affected by political turmoil, personal loss, and moral failure. Key themes in the novel are betrayal, guilt, and redemption, all of which are deeply interconnected and powerfully embodied in the character of Mugo.

Betrayal is a theme that exists in both political and individual spheres. The most important act of betrayal in the novel is Mugo's informing on Kihika to the British authorities, leading to his arrest and eventual execution. This betrayal remains hidden for much of the novel, creating the psychological tension that defines Mugo's character. But Mugo is not the only character who betrays others. Mumbi betrays her husband, Gikonyo, while he is in detention by having an affair with Karanja and bearing his child. Karanja, in turn, betrays his people and the liberation movement by collaborating with the colonial forces and seeking power during the Emergency. In all these instances, betrayal is not merely an external act but also an emotional violation with long-term psychological consequences.

The theme of guilt is linked most directly to betrayal. Ngugi shows that betrayal does not merely end with the act itself; it continues to haunt the characters in one way or another. Mugo's guilt is at the center of the novel's psychological structure. Although he appears outwardly calm and solitary, his inner life is shaped by intense repression. He refuses to confront what he has done and instead buries his guilt so deeply that it manifests as anxiety, suspicion, and emotional detachment. Unlike Mugo, Mumbi acknowledges her mistake and shows remorse. Her emotional honesty enables her to process guilt more directly. In each case, Ngugi presents guilt not as a weakness but as a powerful force that shapes personality, distorts vision, and dictates action.

Finally, the novel presents redemption not as a heroic act, but as a painful confrontation with the truth. Although Mugo's confession leads to his arrest and execution, it is also a moment of psychological insight. On the other hand, Mumbi also yearns for a form of redemption by confessing her betrayal openly to Mugo, and Gikonyo starts to heal through his growing understanding that every human carries a burden of failure. In Ngugi's world, salvation is not easy or immediate. It does not erase guilt; instead, it requires that individuals

acknowledge it, take responsibility for, and seek a path forward through truth and forgiveness.

2. The Construction of Mugo's shadow

In Jungian psychology, the shadow represents the repressed parts of the self that an individual refuses to acknowledge, those emotions, impulses, or truths that are too painful or disturbing to reconcile with oneself. These rejections do not disappear; they operate unconsciously, influencing an individual's behavior, dreams, and emotional responses. Jung regards the denial of the shadow as a path toward inner conflict and psychological imbalance. In *A Grain of Wheat*, Mugo's shadow consists of repressed traits and impulses, such as fear, selfishness, envy, and the desire for self-preservation, which lead to his betrayal of Kihika. His guilt arises as a result of repressing these darker elements of himself. Instead of accepting and integrating these parts of himself into his consciousness, Mugo represses them, resulting in a psychological struggle that shapes his actions, thoughts, and identity throughout the novel.

The roots of Mugo's shadow lie deeper than the betrayal itself. His psychological withdrawal begins during his traumatic childhood. Following the death of his parents, Mugo is left in the care of his cruel and alcoholic aunt. Waitherero would often remind him that his parents died poor, accuse him of stealing, humiliate him, and treat him harshly. She hates him, and she does not try to hide her feelings. Mugo is frequently subjected to his aunt's criticism, and this fosters in him a feeling of inadequacy and insecurity. These early experiences establish a pattern of self-protection through silence and emotional detachment. Mugo learns that vulnerability brings pain, and that the safest way to exist is to remain

unnoticed. This coping mechanism later becomes a psychological refuge when he betrays Kihika. Rather than confront his actions, Mugo represses the guilt, burying it deep within his unconscious. His silence, once a defense against external harm, evolves into a shield that conceals internal conflict, both from others and even from himself. This behavior reflects what Carl Jung defines as repression, which is the unconscious denial or exclusion of painful thoughts, emotions, or experiences.

Projection is attributing one's denied or repressed qualities and feelings to others. Rather than confronting his unconscious aspects, the individual externalizes them, distancing himself from painful reality. Initially, Mugo hates and resents Kihika. He feels uncomfortable with Kihika's ease in discussing blood and sacrifice. The novel depicts Mugo's fleeting jealousy toward Kihika, which is quickly followed by guilt. This moment illustrates Mugo's denial of his jealousy, as he immediately becomes uncomfortable with his inner feelings. One night, Kihika comes to Mugo's hut asking for his help in organizing an underground movement in the new village. Mugo is frightened by the idea but cannot refuse; he fears that refusal might lead to his death. Upon Kihika's departure, Mugo's mind buzzes with thoughts about Kihika's motives for dragging him into conflicts he did not create. In the end, Mugo convinces himself that Kihika is jealous of him, projecting his own repressed emotions outward. This reversal intensifies his resentment and justifies, in his mind, the betrayal that follows.

Throughout the novel, it becomes evident that Mugo does not consciously reflect on his betrayal. It is only later in the narrative that the source of his persistent inner turmoil is fully revealed. Mugo neither acknowledges his guilt nor verbalizes it; in fact, he does not even allow himself to think about it. However, as previously noted, repressed thoughts do not simply vanish. Instead, they continue to exert influence, manifesting in various forms of

psychological distress throughout the narrative. Mugo isolates himself from his community, driven by the fear that any social interaction might expose the truth he hides. His inner world is marked by deep anxiety, irrational suspicions, and a tendency to interpret ordinary situations as threats. These behaviors reflect the psychological strain of living with unresolved guilt and the fear of exposure.

One significant example from the novel occurs when Mugo goes to his shamba early in the morning and encounters other villagers along the way. He attempts to avoid long conversations, experiencing a strong sense of discomfort and shame. When Warui, a village elder, meets Mugo, he greets him warmly and makes casual conversation about the land being softer in the early morning. He then reminds Mugo of what Kenyatta said: “These are days of Uhuru na Kazi” (4). At that moment, Mugo feels deeply embarrassed. Not so much by the words themselves, but because of what they signify: Warui treats him as a man of value, someone who belongs to this new era of freedom and hard work. However, Mugo does not feel worthy of this image. His embarrassment reveals the inner conflict between how others view him and how he sees himself. He carries a secret that makes him feel undeserving of respect, and this creates discomfort even in the most ordinary encounters. Following this, “Mugo walked, his head slightly bowed, staring at the ground as if ashamed of looking about him” (4).

Mugo’s deep mistrust of others is especially evident when the village elders, along with Gikonyo, approach him with a request to lead the Uhuru celebrations. Rather than feeling honored, Mugo interprets their invitation with suspicion, wondering why they chose him out of everyone else. His thoughts spiral: “Why not Gikonyo, Warui, or of the forest fighters? Why Mugo? Why? Why?” (56). Mugo’s reaction shows how disconnected he has

become; even genuine recognition feels threatening. He is overwhelmed by fear and anxiety, convinced that their gesture is a trap designed to expose him.

Another striking instance of Mugo's mistrust occurs during Gikonyo's retelling of Mumbi's betrayal. He opens up emotionally, recounting the pain of discovering that Mumbi had borne another man's child while he was imprisoned. He speaks with raw vulnerability, laying bare his sense of shame, confusion, and heartbreak. But instead of responding with empathy or even simple human connection, Mugo remains silent, detached, and almost cold. He listens without offering any comfort, his face unreadable. To Gikonyo, this silence feels like judgment, as if he's confessing to a puritan priest. However, Mugo's reaction does not arise from moral superiority but from fear. He harbors irrational doubts about Gikonyo's motives, wondering why he would share such a personal story with him. Mugo comes to suspect that Gikonyo's confession is intended to elicit his own admission of guilt, as reflected in his thought: "I see everything...everything...he pretended not to look at me...yet kept on stealing eyes at me...see if I was frightened" (107). This reaction reveals how Mugo's repressed guilt distorts his capacity for authentic connection, turning genuine vulnerability into yet another source of paranoia.

According to Jung, dreams are manifestations of the unconscious that offer symbolic expressions of unresolved conflicts. Unlike Mugo's behavior in waking life, which is shaped by repression and avoidance, his dream exposes the inner reality he cannot confront. In the dream, he finds himself paralyzed on his bed and unable to move or shut his eyes, all while a single drop of water forms somewhere above him. Initially clear, the drop absorbs soot from the thatched roof where it is hovering, growing larger and darker as it inches toward his face. Though he tries to escape, his body refuses to obey. This drop symbolizes the weight of his repressed guilt, which stems from the deeper, unacknowledged aspects of himself, his

shadow. Its steady descent toward his eyes represents the looming threat of unwanted self-awareness, as if the unconscious is forcing him to confront what he has long tried to avoid. Mugo's paralysis illustrates his psychological immobility, revealing how deeply repression has bound him. Even after waking up, Mugo is still unsettled, irrationally in fear that the drop might still pierce his eyes. This lingering fear illustrates the enduring power of the shadow: it cannot be escaped through silence or sleep, for it finds expression even in dreams.

3. The Persona in Mugo's Psychological Conflict

According to Carl Jung, the persona is the mask that a person wears in an attempt to meet the expectations of the surrounding world. In *A Grain of Wheat*, Mugo's persona does not emerge intentionally but through a series of misunderstandings and silence. The villagers, unaware of his secret, project onto him an image of quiet strength and moral integrity. Mugo, rather than correcting them, remains silent, allowing the image to grow. His passive acceptance of this identity becomes the first layer of the persona, born not out of ambition but out of fear and guilt.

One of the clearest signs of Mugo's emerging persona appears when the villagers ask him to lead the Uhuru Day celebrations. Instead of feeling honored, he reacts with fear and confusion, even panic. He is not proud of the invitation, rather, he is terrified by it. Mugo does not want the role, and by refusing it, the villagers misinterpret his action as a profound gesture of humility. They perceive his fear-driven refusal as evidence of modesty and moral greatness. In their eyes, Mugo's silence and withdrawal become further proof of his legendary status, a man too noble to seek power or recognition. Word spreads among the villagers that "The man who had suffered so much had further revealed his greatness in

modesty. By refusing to lead, Mugo had become a legendary hero” (153). From a Jungian perspective, this moment reflects the widening gap between Mugo’s inner reality (shaped by fear and repressed guilt) and the persona projected onto him by the community. His passive refusal strengthens the mask he never intended to wear, deepening the psychological conflict between his true self and the image others demand.

The construction of Mugo’s persona in *A Grain of Wheat* is not the result of a single misunderstanding but rather a gradual process shaped by a series of events. Some of these events are rooted in genuine actions, while others are based on misinterpretations. From the beginning of the novel, Mugo’s isolation and reserved behavior allow the villagers to project on him their hopes and attribute to him virtues he does not consciously claim. During the Emergency, Mugo demonstrates an act of compassion when he intervenes to help a pregnant woman who is being beaten by a homeguard. Although he does not know the woman personally, Mugo is moved by sympathy when others around him ignore the incident and continue their activities. Acting on impulse, he seizes the homeguard’s whip to prevent further violence against the woman. As a result, the guards turn on Mugo himself; he is beaten and eventually taken to prison. He also leads a hunger strike back in Rira, and helps the old woman when her deaf son is killed. These actions are authentic acts of courage and kindness. Yet, even in moments when his actions are less noble, they are absorbed into the growing legend surrounding him.

Upon his release from the detention camps, Mugo delivers a speech in which he reflects on the suffering they have endured, emphasizing that it is the hope of returning to their homes and families that enables them to endure the torture and cruel treatment. Mugo is deeply disgusted by what he is saying. He is eventually unable to complete his speech and descends from the platform toward his hut. Part of his speech is as follows: “We only thought

of home. We longed for the day when we would see our women laugh, or even see our children fight and cry. When we thought that one day we would return home to see the faces and hear the voices of our mothers and our wives and our children we became strong” (58). Mugo does not believe in the words he is speaking; he wants to cry out that they are untrue, as he has no home or family to return to. However, the villagers who are listening to his speech misinterpret his sudden silence and withdrawal. They believe that Mugo has been overwhelmed with emotion and so deeply affected by the memories that he is unable to continue speaking.

In each case, the villagers construct a heroic image that combines Mugo's real actions with their idealized interpretations. From a Jungian perspective, this process demonstrates how the persona can be shaped not only by deliberate deception but by a powerful combination of social projection and passive acceptance. While some of Mugo's deeds, such as helping the pregnant woman during the Emergency and leading a hunger strike, are authentic expressions of compassion and courage, others are more ambiguous, shaped by fear or withdrawal. Regardless of his intentions, the villagers interpret his behavior through the lens of their hopes, constructing an image of him as a man of extraordinary moral strength. Mugo's failure to correct the villagers' misconceptions allows the persona to solidify, until it becomes inseparable from how the community perceives him, and how he eventually perceives himself.

As the novel progresses, Mugo's relationship to the persona changes. It is no longer just something others impose on him, it becomes something he begins to want. After recalling the Bible verse Kihika underlines in red, “He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy” (22), Mugo starts fantasizing about the possibility of being good again. He begins to imagine that he might help the community, that he might lead people

“across the desert to the new Jerusalem” (118), a clear symbol of spiritual and moral leadership. Mugo is searching for a way to believe he is not beyond repair. His fantasy of leadership is not grounded in reality; it is a psychological escape. He is trying to use the persona not just to hide, but to transform, to become the man people already believe he is. This marks a shift from passive acceptance of the mask to active identification with it. For a moment, Mugo truly hopes that he can live within the image that once terrified him.

This new vision is not only driven by Mugo's attachment to the Bible verse and his desire to believe in it, but it is also reinforced by his community's view of him as a hero, worthy of admiration and leadership. The villagers' respect, praise, and desire for Mugo to become a leader, along with the words of Gikonyo and Githua, strengthen his belief in the possibility of embracing this new identity.

Gikonyo reminds Mugo of a speech he had once given, telling him that as he spoke, he felt he was reading his heart. He tells him he was brave not to confess during their time in the detention camp and that the other detainees admired his courage and felt ashamed of themselves. Gikonyo explains that they were proud of Mugo, resented him, and hated him, all at the same time. They saw him as an ideal, someone who embodied the strength they wished they had. Gikonyo believes that Mugo has a good heart and is the kind of man “who ought to have been the first to taste the fruits of independence” (60). Similarly, Githua, while recalling the story of how he lost his leg during the Emergency, also contributes to Mugo's shifting self-perception. When Githua calls Mugo “chief” and asks him to pay for his drink, Mugo searches his pockets and gives him two shillings. Githua's final words, “Chief. Remember me. Remember the poor. Remember Githua” (110), move something deep inside Mugo. For the first time, he begins to believe that he might truly become the person the community

imagines him to be. Thus, he feels that Gikonyo's and Githua's words have brought him to the edge of revelation.

That night, Mugo had a dream. He was back in Rira, a line of detainees stood against the wall, with John Thompson pointing his gun at them. He was ready to shoot them, unless they revealed what they knew about Kihika. In a desperate plea, the detainees cried out to him, "Mugo save us" (110). On the surface, the dream seems to echo the role assigned to him by the villagers: the one who leads, the one who saves. It seems to offer Mugo a redemptive possibility, a reflection of his unconscious desire to live up to the image of moral strength that others believe in. However, from a Jungian perspective, this dream reveals the psychological conflict that has been building throughout the novel. It represents the collision of Mugo's shadow and persona. The detainees' desperate cries are a symbolic manifestation of Mugo's repressed guilt, the voices of those he betrayed, now demanding recognition. The dream shows that even in Mugo's fantasy about leadership, he is haunted by those people he failed. Thus, the dream is not a simple message from the unconscious, but a battlefield where the persona and shadow struggle for dominance.

4. The Disintegration of Mugo's Persona

Although Mugo initially interprets his dream as a salvation message, his confrontation with reality soon dispels the illusion. When he visits Mumbi, she confesses her betrayal for her husband, Gikonyo, and openly shares with him her guilt, shame, and the emotional breakdown that follows. Her vulnerability compels Mugo to confront the reality he has long repressed: that betrayal, once enacted, cannot be erased through public deeds nor concealed beneath heroic fantasies. True healing demands acknowledgment and confession. This realization shakes the foundation of Mugo's newly constructed persona.

Mugo's hope of redeeming himself through leadership is further shattered when he learns that Githua, the man who has praised him publicly, was not shot by anybody and did not lose his leg due to this. It is through a personal accident that Githua loses his left leg. General R tells Mugo that Githua always says this because "It makes his life more interesting to himself. He invents a meaning for his life" (133). Mugo is disappointed with Githwa; consequently, he realizes that even the narrative around which he has built his dream of salvation is unstable. The emotional images that support his fantasies are revealed to be partly false, and with them his imagined path to salvation collapses. These moments mark the beginning of a true psychological confrontation: the persona cannot survive because it is built on denial, not truth. Mugo's inner world collapses, compelling him to confront his guilt directly, a painful but necessary step toward individuation.

Following this, Mugo's psychological state further deteriorates as the conflict between his persona and shadow intensifies. He is going back toward his hut when he sees thick blood dripping from its mud walls. Mugo is unsure if what he sees is real, but as he comes closer to the hut, he realizes it is only in his mind. Startled, Mugo thinks to himself, "Was he cracking in the head?" (152), and again, he looks at the walls of his hut. This shows that the persona can no longer hold, and the shadow breaks into Mugo's consciousness. Mugo's fear, guilt, and confusion become stronger than his conscious mind. Ultimately, the persona cannot protect Mugo from the truth. As the pressure around him builds and the gap between perception and reality widens, he is pushed toward confession.

5. Mugo's Incomplete Path toward Individuation

Mugo's psychological disruption intensifies during his encounter with Mumbi. She visits him on behalf of the women of Thabai and Rung'ei, urging him to lead the Uhuru celebrations. During this encounter, and for the first time, Mugo confesses his betrayal to another person. As a consequence, his persona begins to collapse, no longer able to contain the weight of his internal conflict. His confession marks the beginning of a psychological shift away from the social mask and toward a confrontation with the repressed aspects of the self.

On Uhuru Day, General R. delivers a speech instead of Mugo and calls the traitor to step forward and confess, expecting it to be Karanja. The villagers look in every direction, waiting for the traitor to appear. Suddenly, Mugo steps forward, and all the villagers' eyes turn towards him. They feel relieved that he has finally arrived and wait for him to speak, unaware that he has come to confess. Mugo approaches the platform and proclaims himself Judas, revealing what he has been hiding for a long time, "You asked for the man who led Kihika to this tree, here. That man stands before you, now. Kihika came to me by night. He put his life into my hands, and I sold it to the whiteman. And this thing has eaten into my life all these years" (193). Mugo's public confession marks the breaking point of his persona and the release of the shadow he has kept repressed for so long. Through his public confession, he begins the painful but inevitable process of individuation. Mugo no longer hides behind a false identity, but finally faces himself as he truly is.

Mugo's public confession of his betrayal signifies the breaking down of the false self he has unconsciously nurtured. In Jungian terms, the persona represents the mask one wears in society, and individuation requires loosening this mask to confront the shadow, the repressed or denied aspects of the self. Mugo's confession is significant because it reveals the truth he has long suppressed, allowing unconscious guilt and fear to come to consciousness.

The narrator notes that “He was conscious of himself, of every step he made, of the images that rushed and whirled through his mind with only one constant thread: so he was responsible for whatever he had done in the past, and for whatever he would do in the future. The consciousness frightened him” (204). This moment marks the beginning of self-awareness, yet in Jungian theory, individuation also requires deeper introspection, emotional integration, and personality transformation. Since Mugo dies soon after this moment, he is no longer able to continue this inner work. Therefore, although his confession marks the first step toward individuation, the process remains unfinished due to the absence of psychological integration and a sustained encounter with the unconscious.

Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter has provided the historical and literary contexts of *A Grain of Wheat*, as well as a biography of the author Ngugi wa Thiong’o. Furthermore, it has analyzed Mugo’s character relying on Jung’s analytical psychology. The analysis has followed Mugo’s psychological development from his initial concealment of the shadow to his eventual confrontation with it, using the concepts of the shadow, repression, projection, persona, and individuation.

Initially, Mugo represses parts of himself that he refuses to acknowledge, including his childhood memories, feelings, and urges that are too painful to deal with. But even though he has buried these aspects deep down, they continue to affect him unconsciously, shaping his actions, dreams, and connections with others throughout the story.

Mugo dreams of being recognized by his society for his success and wealth earned from working the land. However, his dream shatters when Kihika enters his life, as Mugo is

driven by his unconscious desires to betray him. In Jungian terms, the persona, the social mask one wears to gain acceptance, becomes central to Mugo's internal conflict. When the villagers project onto him the image of the hero, Mugo sees it as an opportunity to forget his past and embrace his dreams again. The conflict intensifies between his persona and shadow, leading to his public confession and the collapse of his social mask. This act marks the beginning of his journey toward individuation. However, the process remains incomplete because he is executed soon after his confession, unable to continue integrating the unconscious aspects of his psyche.

General Conclusion

This dissertation examined Mugo's character in *A Grain of Wheat* through a Jungian psychoanalytic lens. To achieve this, the work was structured into three main chapters, each addressing a specific aspect of the research.

The first chapter presented a literature review of the novel from various critical perspectives. *A Grain of Wheat* has been examined through historical, political, and social lenses. Many scholars have also analyzed the novel's narrative techniques, symbolism, and themes of guilt and redemption.

The second chapter offered an overview of psychoanalytic literary theory, beginning with Sigmund Freud, the pioneer of psychoanalysis. The chapter also examined the contributions of later theorists, such as Alfred Adler, Erik Erikson, and Melanie Klein, who expanded or revised Freud's ideas. Finally, it addressed Carl Jung's analytical psychology, introducing key concepts essential for the study: the psyche, shadow, persona, repression, and individuation.

The third and final chapter dealt with the historical and literary contexts of *A Grain of Wheat*. It provided a brief biography of Ngugi wa Thiong'o and described the novel's main characters, Mugo, Kihika, Mumbi, Gikonyo, and Karanja, and outlined its central themes. The chapter concluded with a Jungian psychoanalytic reading of Mugo's character.

The research paper analyzed Mugo's psychological transformation throughout the novel. Initially, Mugo was depicted as an isolated character who was uncomfortable interacting with others. Drawing on Jung's theory, the dissertation highlighted that the unconscious is divided into the personal and collective unconscious, where the personal unconscious comprises all the repressed elements that have the potential to influence one's behavior and personality.

This is what happened with Mugo throughout the novel. He repressed his shadow, the neglected parts of the self, be it events, traits, or emotions he did not want to acknowledge. His betrayal, guilt, envy, and drive for self-preservation were all repressed aspects of his psyche that continued to shape his thoughts and actions unconsciously. Meanwhile, the villagers perceived Mugo as a hero, unaware of the secrets he was hiding. This situation revealed the importance of the persona, the social mask or personality one adopts to fit into societal expectations. Although Mugo did not initially create this persona deliberately, he gradually began to identify with the image others had projected onto him.

The persona did not hold for so long, as Mugo's confrontation with reality soon destroyed the illusion of living a hero's life and forgetting his past mistakes. The disintegration of the persona, followed by Mugo's confrontation with his shadow through his public confession, paved the way toward individuation, the process of becoming whole through self-awareness and the integration of the unconscious. Although Mugo confronted the truth, his death halted the psychological journey toward full integration and personal transformation. As a result, the process of individuation remained incomplete.

This research paper contributes to existing scholarship by offering a psychological reading of *A Grain of Wheat* using Carl Jung's analytical psychology, an under-explored topic about the novel. While several studies have looked into the novel's historical, political, and social contexts, this study delved into the inner psychological battle of the protagonist, Mugo, which is often overlooked. Highlighting key Jungian concepts such as the shadow, persona, and individuation, enhances our understanding of Mugo's personality, moving beyond mere external factors. It also shows how unresolved internal conflict and personal unconscious can affect emotions, behavior, and identity, contributing to the analysis of postcolonial characters in African literature.

Future research could also investigate how Jung's theory applies to other characters in *A Grain of Wheat* to offer a more comprehensive psychological reading of the novel's protagonists. This psychoanalytic approach could also be extended to Ngugi wa Thiong'o's other novels to examine recurring themes of guilt, identity, and inner conflict in his works. Based on Jungian or Freudian frameworks, comparative analyses of Ngugi and other postcolonial writers could provide insight into how psychological repression and individuation manifest differently within diverse cultural and historical contexts.

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Résumé

Cette étude analyse le développement psychologique de Mugo, le protagoniste du roman *A Grain of Wheat* de Ngugi wa Thiong'o, dans une perspective jungienne. Elle retrace l'évolution de la culpabilité de Mugo, de la dissimulation à la confession, mettant en lumière les bouleversements intérieurs du personnage tout au long de ce processus. En s'appuyant sur

la psychologie analytique de Jung, l'étude examine la construction de l'ombre et de la persona chez Mugo, ainsi que le conflit qui en résulte, culminant dans la confession finale, perçue comme une étape vers l'individuation. La recherche souligne également le rôle de l'inconscient dans la formation de la personnalité et de l'état psychologique de Mugo tout au long du récit. Elle révèle comment les forces inconscientes, notamment la culpabilité, la peur et l'instinct de préservation, influencent ses actions et ses interactions, ce qui se traduit souvent par de l'anxiété, de la suspicion et de l'irrationalité.

Mots-clés: *A Grain of Wheat*, Psychologie analytique de Jung, Culpabilité, Ombre, Persona, Individuation.

ملخص

تُحلل هذه الدراسة التطور النفسي لموغو، بطل رواية حبة قمح لنغوي وا ثيونغو، من منظور يونغي. يتتبع هذا البحث تطور شعور موغو بالذنب من الإخفاء إلى الاعتراف، مسلطاً الضوء على الاضطراب الداخلي للشخصية طوال هذه العملية. باستخدام علم النفس التحليلي ليونغ، تتبّع الدراسة تشكل ظل موغو وقناعه والصراع بينهما الذي يؤدي إلى الاعتراف كخطوة نحو التفرد. كما تُسلط هذه الأطروحة الضوء على دور العقل اللاواعي في تشكيل شخصية موغو وحالته النفسية على مدار الرواية. وتكشف كيف تؤثر القوى

اللاواعية، وخاصة الشعور بالذنب والخوف ودافع الحفاظ على الذات، على سلوكه و ردود أفعاله، مما يؤدي غالبًا إلى القلق والشك واللاعقلانية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: حبة القمح، علم النفس التحليلي اليونغي، الذنب، الظل، البرسونا، التفرد.