

## Ngugi's *Matigari*,<sup>1</sup> a Non-Materialist Discourse and Post-Modernism

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One of the major themes in Ngugi's latest novel *Matigari* is the deceptiveness of any notion of an epistemological rupture between colonial and post-colonial society. The confrontational tone of *Devil on the Cross* is retained and *Matigari* posits a vision of utopia, which must be obtained through armed struggle. While Ngugi also in *Matigari* is reversing the colonial binarism in order to combat the hegemonic interpellations of the neo-colonial regime, I argue that there is a paradigmatic shift in *Matigari* as the novel transcends the orbit of a Marxist, materialist discourse of *Devil on the Cross*. By including magic and supernatural elements, *Matigari* propagates a utopia which is based on what one could call an 'ethical universal,' in Ngugi's case premised on the ethical principles of Gikuyuism, Christianity and Marxism. This non-materialist discourse with its magical aspects involves, as Brink states in another context,

an acknowledgement of a more holistic way of approaching the world, an awareness of more things in heaven and earth than have been dreamt of in our philosophy, a free interaction between the living and the dead...<sup>2</sup>

Ngugi's extension of his ideological base is premised on a profound disillusionment with the concrete socio-economic, cultural and political realities in the 1970s and the 1980s from which *Matigari* is generated. It is my contention in this article that *Matigari* addresses the urgency of the polarised situation of post-colonial Kenya, not only by transgressing his former, materialist discourse, but by having only one story to tell and thereby distancing his narrative from the multiple stories of post-modern fiction. The final part of this article discusses the relationship between *Matigari*'s role as a prophet and the decentred, fragmentary voice of post-modern literature.

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## No New Land

In *Penpoints* Ngugi claims that Art has more questions than it has answers. Art starts with a position of not knowing and seeks to know. Hence its exploratory character. In fact art has hardly any answers.<sup>3</sup>

Ngugi even goes on to illustrate his point by using Matigari as an example, who was going about asking questions related to the truth and justice of what was going on in the country. Actually Matigari was only asking one question: where could a person wearing the belt of peace find truth and justice in a post-colonial society?<sup>4</sup>

Ngugi's emphasis on art's and literature's function may in some way seem to contradict Ngugi's own development from *A Grain of Wheat* to *Devil on the Cross* and as I will show, *Matigari*. In the first part of *Matigari* there is a sense that this Socratic, exploratory mood is being introduced where Matigari's quest is governed by two questions: where is truth and justice to be found and: 'Had anything really changed between then and now?'<sup>5</sup> These questions are being tested as Matigari explores the ideological cartography of the country after independence. Matigari confirms the impression from *Devil on the Cross* that the expected discontinuity between the colonial and post-colonial times is illusory. In fact, any idea about a new land as a result of the liberation struggle is being queried and eventually pulverised as a result of Matigari's numerous, depressing experiences after his return from the forest. After his encounter with the children who are being exploited by the adults, his Socratic query is shifting to a more rhetorical one: 'So a handful of people still profited from the suffering of the majority, then sorrow of the many being the joy of the few?'<sup>6</sup>

In the prison the true story of the land is being told:

Our country is truly as dry as this concrete floor. Our leaders have hearts as cold as that of Pharaoh. Or even colder than those of the colonialists. They cannot hear the cry of the people.<sup>7</sup>

The collapse of the dream for a better post-independence future has created an atmosphere of repression and fear, transforming people from truth-sayers to self-interested egotists, blatantly exposed in the student's and teacher's idealistic response in the cell and their cowardly rejoinder to Matigari's moral challenges later.<sup>8</sup>

Ngugi's insistence on the Socratic role of art seems therefore more theoretical than seriously related to *Matigari*. While questions can be asked, there is a sense that the answers are grounded in and premised on a fairly preconceived ideological foundation. *Matigari*'s version of post-colonial Kenya is thus based on the fierce

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contestation of 'whose reality counts. As the teacher says: 'I also know that there are two truths. One truth belongs to the oppressor, the other belongs to the oppressed'.<sup>9</sup>

By constructing "the reality" it wants to convey through dominant ideology's various repressive and propagandistic means, the neo-colonial state as experienced by Matigari represents a monolithic force which fights to maintain hegemonical control. The question of representation is consciously and deliberately dealt with by the representatives of the neo-colonial regime: 'We have qualified professors who can write new history for us'.<sup>10</sup> It is this continuous reinscription of neo-colonial ideology which is being targeted by Matigari and his co-patriots.

### **Matigari in a Prophetic Role - a Paradigmatic Shift**

Whereas Ngugi's earlier fiction has been focusing on objectifying the reality of grim post-colonialism with an underlying aspiration for revolution, he seems in *Matigari* - even though the idea of revolution is by no means forgotten - to realise the historical limitations of Marxism and its resultant lack of elasticity. Matigari's response to the repression and exploitation of the present regime represents in one way, I will claim, a paradigmatic shift in Ngugi's development as an author. As a prophet Matigari not only passes judgement on the present state of affairs, but also projects a vision of a new Jerusalem. By straying away from a strict materialist discourse, Ngugi lifts the novel beyond a mere reiteration of Marxist jargon by widening the scope of combat strategies, thus challenging in multiple ways the present order and the inevitability of the post-colonial situation. By transcending in this way the fixity of the post-colonial situation, the response to post-colonial imposition is more complex than Brenda Cooper's somewhat condescending remarks about 'the biblical tone of tilling and reaping and the exaction of godly vengeance'<sup>11</sup> attest to. The dual and enigmatic nature of Matigari (moving beyond time and space and still having a material reality) does not, however, detract from the over-all focus on the ethical and political realities of the novel. In a sense Matigari functions as the beautiful one who comes back from the bush and queries the healthiness of the post-colonial situation, captured in the heading of the second part of the novel: "Seeker of Truth and Justice." As a prophet who tries to reinvigorate the spirit from the days of Mau Mau, Matigari represents these ideals of resistance against oppression. Embodying the double-edged role of the prophet Old Testament style, Matigari both projects the Truth to the people and passes judgement on the present state of affairs. But Matigari seeks beyond the limits of a traditional prophetic role by claiming a Christ-like stature. This can be attributed to the various specific New Testament allusions coupled directly to Matigari. Matigari's departure from the novel in the midst of the thunder and lightning is reminiscent of the New Testament's rendering of Jesus' death and ascension.

Ngugi admitted long before the writing of *Matigari* the rationale behind the use of the Bible: 'I have also drawn from the Bible in the sense that the Bible was for a long time the only literature available to Kenyan people that has been available to them in their national languages.'<sup>12</sup> Even though Ngugi's use of biblical allusions

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and the very similarities between Matigari and Christ thus can be seen as a way of accommodating his audience, there is a shift in how these biblical allusions are used which signal a vision of a new order beyond a mere materialist discourse. While the biblical allusions in *Devil on the Cross* often turned sour and negative, the positive ethical implication of Christianity was tentatively put on the agenda. In *Matigari* this is taken a step further and I agree with Maughan-Brown who sees *Matigari* as ‘a new departure based on a reassessment of the cultural, and thereby political significance of religion.’<sup>13</sup> Ngugi’s characterisation of individual church people are as harsh as before, with Guthera’s father as a very notable exception. Characterised as a devout Christian and a church leader with high moral principles who support the children altruistically, he is at the same time politically very active in the liberation struggle. Coming as a shock to Guthera his activism leads to his death:

Is it true? (that you are an activist - my insertion) ... Yes, for there is no greater love than this: that men and women should give up their lives for the people by taking to the mountains and forests.<sup>14</sup>

Here the biblical reference (the gospel of love) is contextualised into the political and economic situation of the neo-colonial state, projecting visions about the ideological foundations on which the new Kenya must build. Admittedly old wine in new bottles, it nevertheless underlines Ngugi’s perception of a post-colonial situation which desperately calls for moral rearmament based on age-old principles. Referring exclusively to religious principles in a non-transcendent,<sup>15</sup> here-and-now context, *Matigari* emphatically refutes that he is ‘the one whose second coming is prophesied’.<sup>16</sup> Ngugi uses religion in a secularised version to facilitate his message of change:

The God who is prophesied is in you, in me and in other humans. He has always been there inside us since the beginning of time. Imperialism has tried to kill that God within us. But one day that God will return for the dead...and liberate us who believe in Him...But...if you let your country go to the imperialist enemy and its local watch-dogs, it is the same thing as killing that God who is inside you...<sup>17</sup>

It is liberation theology in a new, very secular fashion as Ngugi wants to reinvigorate values like peace, justice, equality and brotherly love that are solidly based on Christian ethics. Moreover, such values are concomitant with the traditional, Gikuyu or Kenyan values which are expressed in the traditional songs of the novel. In this way *Matigari* offers another alternative than Fanon’s view of religion as detrimental to revolutionising the masses:

The colonialist bourgeoisie is helped in its work of calming down the natives by the inevitable religion. All those saints who have turned the other cheek, and who have forgiven trespasses against them, and who have

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been spat on and insulted without shrinking are studied and held up as examples.<sup>18</sup>

The novel's paradigm of a new national culture is akin to Appiah's definition of the establishment of a national heritage, 'constructed through the invention of traditions, the careful filtering of the rough torrent of historical event into the fine stream of an official narrative, the creation of a homogenous legacy of values and experience.'<sup>19</sup> In such a perspective it is hardly ironical, as Ranger claims, that 'those like Ngugi who repudiates bourgeois elite culture face the ironic danger of embracing another set of colonial inventions instead.'<sup>20</sup> The eclectic nature of Ngugi's counter-discourse is determined by the ideological conviction that such a discourse is necessary in an attempt to rescue Kenya from destruction, an eclecticism well-established in African resistance from the days prior to independence.

Ngugi opens, by transcending his own materialism, a terrain which takes into account or acknowledges other perceptions of reality deeply ingrained in the people he wants to address. It is a way of acknowledging the cultural roots and the epistemological horizon of the Kenyan peasants and workers, and a way of linking up with a cultural environment which the exiled Ngugi has been somewhat alienated from.

### ***Matigari*, Multiple Stories and Post-Modernism**

Matigari's authoritative role as a prophet and truth sayer stands in clear contrast to the decentered and problematised voice of post-modern writing. By employing the image of the prophet as the main representational figure, the text has already crushed any notion of multiple representations as equally authentic or true. As Ngugi himself recognizes, the prophet is linked to concepts like truth and authority, concepts which are not apotheosised in post-modern criticism, but which are urgent in Ngugi's political and, it must added, aesthetic struggle.

Unlike Mugo in *A Grain of Wheat*, Matigari, despite his multifaceted roles and transcendental qualities, thus comes out as a fairly one-dimensional character who rarely questions, like prophets seldom do, the legitimacy of his truth-finding mission or the truth value of his answers. Also towards the end the binary understanding of the post-colonial world is reiterated: 'Matigari spoke again: "There are indeed two worlds," he said, as echoing Guthera's words. "The world of the patriots and that of sell-outs."'<sup>21</sup> Matigari emerges, by embodying the novel's ideological location, as a centered, unified self who as a prophet distinguishes truth from false and maintains that there is basically one story to tell: 'The world is turned upside down, but it must be set right again. For I have seen that in our land today lies are decreed to be the truth, and the truth decreed to be a lie.'<sup>22</sup> Matigari's crucial, ideological function as the epitome of the new Kenya is thus to attempt to repress alternative stories and thereby to cover up - up to a point - the dilemmas of meaning-making through representation.

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The text's epistemological and ontological basis thus differs, according to Craig Tapping, from that of metropolitan critics whose

refutation of such absolute and logo-centric categories as these—'truth' or 'meaning,' 'purpose' or 'justification'—the new literatures... are generated from cultures for whom such terms as 'authority' and 'truth' are empirically urgent in their demands.<sup>23</sup>

By presenting one version of history or the contemporary political situation with no time for an elaborate construction of self, the text hardly challenges its own totalising conception of reality, thus imposing a certain meaning on the reader/listener by stating the 'real' state of affairs in the post-colonial situation in Kenya. Conscious of the fact, through colonial and post-colonial history writing, that narrating the past becomes a question of representing, that is, of constructing and interpreting, not of objective recording, the text foregrounds the self-conscious post-colonial inscription of history, but shies away from exposing or critiquing its own encoded interpretative representation. Whereas post-modern fiction exposes 'that events no longer speak for themselves, but are shown to be consciously composed into a narrative, whose constructed, not found order is imposed upon them, often overtly by the narrating figure,'<sup>24</sup> *Matigari* focuses, not on the act of imposing order, but on narrating a story with an encoded message with which it interpellates the reader. Since there in *Matigari* are no multiple endings the text does not suggest suspicious continuity or relativised finality. The novel is concerned with truth and with linking past to present, shying away from 'the tensions that exist between the pastness (and absence) of the past and the presentness (and presence) of the present and... between the actual events of the past and the historian's act of processing them into facts.'<sup>25</sup>

Whereas Hutcheon asserts that 'to accept unquestioningly such fixed representations is to condone social systems of power which validate and authorize some images of women (or blacks, Asians, gays etc.) and not others,'<sup>26</sup> *Matigari* focuses on fixed representations as a necessary tool to expose both post-colonial power and its oppositional elements. This insistence on fixed representation is part of the combat code: whereas *A Grain of Wheat* in the original version was concerned with the analysis and reflection of the fragmented self of the colonized and the reconstruction of that very self, there is a sense that *Matigari* focuses on the direct, uncompromising and one-dimensional reaction and opposition against the oppressor.

The text tries to restore, as Ngugi confirms, also in *Penpoints*, 'voices to the land. It tries to give voices back to the silenced.'<sup>27</sup> The implication is not necessarily that Ngugi rejects Spivak's query about the subaltern's potential/possibility to speak, but that 'A neo-colonial state tries to impose silence on the population as a whole... Art gives voice to silence in the great prophetic tradition.'<sup>28</sup> Ngugi is thus not so concerned with the theoretical problem about the reconstruction of the subaltern voice, but focuses on *giving* the subaltern a voice. It is this urgency of addressing and

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speaking for the people who feel betrayed and long for “a new Kenya” which is the engine of the novel. Old concepts like the failures and betrayals of independence are used because Ngugi insists on their appropriateness in a new era.

While there may be some truth in Simon Gikandi’s claim, in an article from 1992, that Matigari doesn’t understand ‘the new Kenya because he has been for too long in the forest,’<sup>29</sup> the real reason for his incomprehension seems more due to, as we have seen, his initial confusion about the lack of epistemological rupture which independence promised rather than any complexity and novelty brought about by a new order. Gikandi questions in the same article the relevance of Matigari’s fact-finding mission even if Matigari may find the truth: ‘Matigari’s words may resonate with the truth, but the ideological machinery of the state determines the realities of the nation.’<sup>30</sup> By privileging the contemporary material practices without, it seems, questioning the legitimacy of those very practices, Gikandi here seems to belong politically and epistemologically to another world than Ngugi. Gikandi’s criticism is grounded on the ideological premise that the paradigms have changed since Matigari was in the forest. Whereas Ngugi stresses continuity and linkages, Gikandi underlines discontinuity, accusing Ngugi of filling the new bottles with old wine, resulting in an ideological dead-end street:

Writers who still seem to believe that the post-colonial situation is simply the continuation of colonialism under the guise of independence, or that the narrative of decolonization can be projected into the post-colonial world, seem to be entrapped in an ideological cul-de-sac.<sup>31</sup>

Critiquing *Matigari* and thus Ngugi for insisting that Matigari is the voice of the nation, he is ‘the crystallization of the collective desires of the nation,’<sup>32</sup> Gikandi projects a picture of a post-independent Kenya which cannot be reduced to a single ideological formula. Gikandi’s critique is premised on his denigration of Ngugi’s ideology which he calls ‘primeval (expressed through Gikuyu legends and Christian allegories).’<sup>33</sup> True as some of his criticism against the text’s simplicity and one-dimensionality may be, there is a sense that Gikandi’s own post-modern ideology is suspiciously unpolitical and non-agency oriented. His ‘analysis’ of the international and national scene is at best very resigned as well as abortive, unwilling, it seems, to invoke the subaltern voice or analyse subaltern agency or to critique the present state of affairs. Whereas Ngugi wants to fight the present material practices also in fictional terms Gikandi sees literature as an arena of exposing the plural stories of post-colonial realities, thereby reducing the urgency of addressing what Ngugi sees as the moral and political disease in post-colonial Kenya.

Gikandi’s very critical analysis of *Matigari* from 1992 has been supplemented by a much more sympathetic reading in the chapter on *Matigari* in his recent book on Ngugi.<sup>34</sup> There Gikandi tones down his

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explicit political criticism of Ngugi by maintaining that *Matigari* privileges form over content and ‘reality’: ‘reality has become secondary to the forms in which it is represented’<sup>35</sup> Still Gikandi acknowledges Matigari’s political dilemmas: ‘The overriding question for him now is how he can meet the challenge posed by these unexpected experiences,’<sup>36</sup> but insists on the importance of Matigari’s identity in interpreting the novel. Gikandi writes:

while the novel ends by affirming the familiar themes about revolution and change, such affirmations are made against the background of doubt and uncertainty triggered by Matigari’s mysterious identity which the ending of the novel confounds rather than resolves.<sup>37</sup>

Against such a reading of *Matigari* my earlier contention that the uncertainty of Matigari’s identity must not be linked to any confusion about Matigari’s political message is supported by the final pages of the novel, where - after Matigari’s ascension - Muriuki digs up ‘all the things that Matigari had hidden,’<sup>38</sup> picking up Matigari’s cartridge belt, the sword and the AK 47. Clearly Muriuki is in the process of following in the ideological footsteps of Matigari (and thus confirming grassroots agency – for the first time- without Matigari), re-echoed in the last slogan where Muriuki seemed to hear,

the voices of the students and of other patriots of all different nationalities of the land, singing in harmony:  
Victory will be ours!  
Victory will be ours!  
Victory will be ours!  
Victory will be ours.<sup>39</sup>

This somewhat romanticised ending confirms the novel’s ideological closure and Ngugi’s paradigmatic stance which, according to critics like Wilson-Tagoe (and Gikandi, as already noted) are inadequate because the individual narrator, in this case Matigari, remains assured and convinced of the truths he is expressing. By employing Nuridin Farah’s *Maps* to illustrate the new paradigm Wilson-Tagoe shows how the authority of the single narrative voice is decentered and problematized and where the concepts of freedom and community are interrogated which, according to Wilson-Tagoe,

the earlier nationalist perspectives had taken for granted.... Farah’s *Maps* destabilizes the often grossly romanticized and stridently patriarchal idealism that surrounds liberationist politics and their construction of

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national and ethnic identities...The logic of the narrative rejects any unified or assured notion about nation and ethnicity.<sup>40</sup>

The call for new paradigms is summed up by Wilson-Tagoe:

The questioning of assumptions about subjective consciousness and continuity, of the homogeneity of culture, and the recognition of ambivalence in all cultural enunciation are aspects that one encounters in the often self-reflexive texts of post-colonial writing.<sup>41</sup>

The problem of representation is not necessarily “solved,” however, by resorting to post-modernism’s self-reflexivity and plural stories. Having been carefully selected the plural stories are also ways of encoding meanings which seemingly shy away from absolutes and the truth. Plurality and fragmentation may also be interpreted as an ideological imposition of a universe which is quite contrary to the universe as conceived e.g. by the Azande of the Sudan where meaning seems to be fixed.<sup>42</sup> The post-modern idea of globalising plural stories as the right perception of reality comes close to a neo-colonial imposition which is derived from the Euro-American epistemological crisis. Globalisation has a positivist streak to it which ignores the call from anthropologists for a more interpretative mood which analyses societies on their own premises.<sup>43</sup> It is true that ‘multiple and peripheral perspectives offered in the fiction’s eye-witness accounts resist any final meaningful closure,’<sup>44</sup> but it offers, paradoxically speaking, instead a post-modernist closure which is apotheosised: a non-closure, fragmentary, pluralistic closure. For even a post-modern plot or a narrative structure is, in Hutcheon’s words, ‘a totalizing representation that integrates multiple and scattered events into one unified story.’<sup>45</sup> A view which maintains that one master narrative of plural stories is valid for all narratives is close to disregarding the differential economic, class, and cultural formation of the countries in the third world.

The inherent contradictions in post-modernism’s focus on plurality and plural stories as the globalized parameters of literary criticism are well summed up by Elizabeth Ferrier:

In spite of the identification of post-modernism with difference, discontinuity and fragmentation, it tends to be marketed globally as a general movement which addresses global concerns... (This) perpetuates an emphasis on ‘global culture’ masking European and American metropolitan biases even as they describe this culture as de-centered, fragmented and marked by difference in opposition to the totalizing culture of modernity.<sup>46</sup>

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The post-modern critical position tends to impose, in Tiffin's words, 'a cultural and intellectual hegemony in relation to the post-colonial world and over post-colonial cultural productions.'<sup>47</sup> Whereas, as Tiffin says,

the disappearance of 'grand narratives' and the crisis of representation characterise the Euro-American post-modernist mood, such expressions of 'breakdown' and crisis instead signal promise and decolonisation potential within post-colonial discourse.<sup>48</sup>

By 'losing faith in both the inexhaustibility and the power of those existing representations,'<sup>49</sup> post-modern critics are being critiqued for also losing faith in the possibility of change and that they are more concerned about the decentred and fragmented self than in the possibility of man to change his surroundings. Whereas Hutcheon tries to counter such criticism by expressing concern about 'the devaluing or ignoring of the "marginalized" challenges (aesthetic and political) of the "ex-centric", those relegated to the fringes of dominant culture - the women, blacks.'<sup>50</sup> Gikandi seems in his criticism of *Matigari* to succumb to a depoliticized version of post-modernism where the legitimacy of those in power and the pressing political problems in the novel are not properly addressed.

In Ngugi's ideological project certain truths are inviolable and are not subject to negotiations or interrogations. *Maps*, to the take the example referred to above, is simply written from another ideological and political perspective where a decentered focus dilutes the political, social and moral issues at stake. Ngugi's rejection of what he would term the perverted values of neo-colonialism, and his insistence on an alternative economic and moral order which stresses equality, justice, truth and moral rearmament may seem obsolete in the post-modern era, but is seen by Ngugi as mandatory in the struggle for the poor in Kenya and Africa. Whereas Gikandi seems more interested in explaining and representing the complex and often confusing post-colonial reality by a conscious selection of certain sociological or development theories, Ngugi is capitalising on strategies which can change a political situation which may have become more complex, but which nevertheless needs to be rectified by a dramatic overthrow of the present order. Ngugi questions if the proposed complexities and contradictions of post-colonial reality which post-modern and post-structuralist theories outline blur and undermine any possibility of profound change of a situation which is dismal for the majority of the people in Kenya.

To acknowledge Ngugi's use of ideological closure and apparent non-ambiguity in his resistance struggle is not the same, however, as to condone one-dimensionality or oversimplification. Even though the urgency of the political situation in many African countries, Kenya included, does not, in Ngugi's view, allow for a fragmentary political and cultural vision which does not give any sense of direction, interrogations of central issues like the nation state, the national consciousness, identity, ethnicity, grassroots agency and the post-revolutionary situation are clearly legitimate items on the post-colonial agenda. Ngugi's clinical cutting of everything which is not directly

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related to the revolutionary struggle also causes a kind of monomania that may distress and tire the reader/listener. As Ndebele writes in another context:

In societies such as South Africa where social, economic, and political oppression is most stark, such conditions tend to enforce, almost with the power of natural law, overt tendentiousness in the artist's choice of subject matter...artistic merit or relevance is determined less by a work's internal coherence ...than by the work's political preoccupation.<sup>51</sup>

*Matigari's* single-minded absorption in the ideologically 'correct' liberation themes leaves no space to 'speak truly' about the dilemmas of resistance, about the complexity of the historical situation and about areas with a human touch: loving and caring in the midst of struggle. The subordination of everything to the Cause means pitting universal values like love, compassion against socialist values, ditching the former on the altar of big words like Truth and Justice. Inclusion of potential gender and ethnic differences would only have added to the multi-faceted picture of a resistance movement which has to live with internal divisions and conflicts. When Ngugi simplifies the analysis of post-colonial Kenya by e.g. heralding that 'Poverty and sorrow shall be banished from our land'<sup>52</sup>, one can legitimately query the adequacy of such one-dimensional sloganeering.<sup>53</sup>

It is not *Matigari's* lack of *multiple, mutually exclusive* endings which are problematic, but its lack of *problematized* endings which in principle are antithetical to the truth-finding mission *Matigari* has embarked upon. By suppressing more problematized endings Ngugi confirms a representation of the post-colonial situation which is fixed and one-dimensional, but which at the same time runs against the suspicions of complexity in the narrative. Even though in line with the novel's ideological project the imposition of an unproblematized, heroic ending exposes a terrain where the previous anxieties and fears are miraculously deleted.

While Ngugi's neglect or rejection of the "new" paradigms of the post-colonial era blurs complexity and diversity, it is at this juncture again worth recalling that the effect of *Matigari's* determinate, revolutionary vision has been more powerful than any other book ever produced for the Kenyan market.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, Ngugi's obsession with change and agency enforces a paradigmatic shift in *Matigari* whose focus on reclaiming national autonomy is not his resort to Western ideology as such, but his inclusion of a non-materialist discourse. Ngugi's counter-discourse is an attempt to prevent the Western crisis of representation from spreading to a continent already distraught by fragmentation and anarchy, and it is Ngugi's legacy in *Matigari* to highlight areas of a resistant order which the author thinks can reclaim historicity and dignity to the African continent.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Matigari*. Translated from Gikuyu by Wangui wa Goro (Oxford University Press, 1987).

- <sup>2</sup> André Brink, "Interrogating silence: new possibilities faced by South African literature." *Writing South Africa: Literature, apartheid and democracy, 1970-1995*, eds. Derek Attridge and Rosemary Jolly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 25.
- <sup>3</sup> Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Penpoints, Gunpoints, and Dreams* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) 15.
- <sup>4</sup> Ngugi, *Penpoints* 16.
- <sup>5</sup> Ngugi 9.
- <sup>6</sup> Ngugi 12.
- <sup>7</sup> Ngugi 53.
- <sup>8</sup> Ngugi 54, 89-92.
- <sup>9</sup> Ngugi 121.
- <sup>10</sup> Ngugi 118.
- <sup>11</sup> Brenda Cooper, *To Lay These Secrets Open: Evaluating African Writing* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1992) 177.
- <sup>12</sup> Ngugi, "An Interview with Ngugi." *The Weekly Review*, 9 Jan. (1978): 10.
- <sup>13</sup> David Maughan-Brown, "Matigari and the Rehabilitation of Religion," *Research in African Literatures* 22, no. 4 (1991): 174.
- <sup>14</sup> Maughan-Brown 35.
- <sup>15</sup> Matigari's transcendence of time and place is of a different, mythical order.
- <sup>16</sup> Maughan-Brown 156.
- <sup>17</sup> Maughan-Brown 156.
- <sup>18</sup> Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* Translated by Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press Inc, 1968) 67.
- <sup>19</sup> Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) 59. See also Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa Jemie and Ihekweazu Madubuike, *Towards the Decolonization of African Literature* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishing, 1980).
- <sup>20</sup> Terence Ranger, "Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa," *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) 262.
- <sup>21</sup> Ranger 152.
- <sup>22</sup> Ranger 137.
- <sup>23</sup> Craig Tapping, "Literary Reflections of Orality. Colin Johnson's Dr. Wooreddy's Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World." Paper delivered at MLA Convention, New Orleans, December 1988.
- <sup>24</sup> Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989) 66.
- <sup>25</sup> Hutcheon, 73.
- <sup>26</sup> Hutcheon, 17.
- <sup>27</sup> Ngugi, *Penpoints*, 25.
- <sup>28</sup> Ngugi 27.
- <sup>29</sup> Simon Gikandi, "The Politics and Poetics of National Formation: Recent African Writing," *From Commonwealth to Postcolonial*, ed. Anna Rutherford. (Sydney: Dangaroo Press, 1992) 382.
- <sup>30</sup> Gikandi, "The Politics," 382.
- <sup>31</sup> Gikandi 379.
- <sup>32</sup> Gikandi 382.
- <sup>33</sup> Gikandi 381.
- <sup>34</sup> See Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
- <sup>35</sup> Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o*, 246.
- <sup>36</sup> Gikandi 243.
- <sup>37</sup> Gikandi 243.
- <sup>38</sup> Gikandi 175.
- <sup>39</sup> Gikandi 175.
- <sup>40</sup> Wilson-Tagoe, "Post-Colonial Literary Theory and the Theorizing of African Literature," *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature* 43 (1995): 114.
- <sup>41</sup> Wilson-Tagoe, "Post-Colonial Literary," 115.
- <sup>42</sup> See E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976).
- <sup>43</sup> See e.g. Peter Winch, "Understanding a Primitive Society" in *Rationality*, ed. Bryan R. Wilson (London: Blackwell, 1970) 78-111.
- <sup>44</sup> Hutcheon 68.

<sup>45</sup> Hutcheon 68.

<sup>46</sup> Elizabeth Ferrier, "Mapping the Space of the Other: Transformations of Space in Postcolonial Fiction and Postmodern Theory." Ph. D. diss., (University of Queensland, 1990) 17.

<sup>47</sup> Helen Tiffin, *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism*, eds. Ian Adam and Helen Tiffin (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1990) x.

<sup>48</sup> Adam and Tiffin, x.

<sup>49</sup> Hutcheon, 8.

<sup>50</sup> Hutcheon, 17. According to Hutcheon the postmodern enterprise includes both a post-modernism of resistance and one of reaction.

<sup>51</sup> Njabulo Ndebele, "Turkish Tales and Some Thoughts on S.A. Fiction." *Staffrider* 6, 1(1984):44.

<sup>52</sup> Ndebele 124. Sorrow can certainly not be declared banished by a political manifesto.

<sup>53</sup> See Gikandi who approves of "a new African literature (is) emerging in which notions of betrayal and the failure of nationalism are seen as inadequate strategies for representing and explaining a post-colonial." Gikandi, "The Politics," 379.

<sup>54</sup> There were rumours in Kenya that a man called Matigari was roaming the country calling for peace and justice, and orders were made for his immediate arrest. See *Matigari*, viii.