Exploring the Liminal in *Matigari*: an Analysis of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's Aesthetic of Resistance and Revolution.

Koffi Jules KOUAKOU
Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny, Côte d'Ivoire
kjuleskoffi@yahoo.fr

Abstract: This article reads both resistance and revolution in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's approach to the concept of the liminal in *Matigari (1988)*. It detects, indeed, threshold attributes in Ngugi's onomastic construction. Furthermore, it contends that linguistic abrogation and appropriation, as well as transgenericity and intertextuality confer a higher hybrid framework to the narrative. As such, the novel nurtures multifarious interstices, which take the form of an aesthetic of resistance to Eurocentrism. As these liminal spaces intertwine to gestate confusion, indeterminacy, and sense of loss, they result in a need for societal change through revolution.

Keywords: Liminality, hybridity, onomastic, resistance, revolution

Résumé: Cet article relève la double notion de résistance et de révolution dans l'approche qu'a Ngugi Wa Thiong'o du concept d'espace liminal dans son roman *Matigari (1988)*. En effet, il décèle des caractéristiques propres à cet espace dans l'esthétique onomastique de l'auteur dans l'œuvre. De même, il articule l'hétérogénéité et l'hybridité dans cet ouvrage comme étant la somme des concepts d'abrogation et d'appropriation linguistique, de transgénéricité et d'intertextualité. L'œuvre abrite, dès lors, une mosaïque d'interstices qui résistent et défient l'universalité de l'Eurocentrisme. La confusion et le manque de repère que génère cet espace liminal débouchent, à terme, sur la nécessité d'une révolution sociétale.

Mots-clés: Liminalité, hybridité, onomastique, résistance, révolution

Introduction

Ngugi Wa Thion'go's *Matigari* stands out as an example of African writers' attempts to retrieve originality and dignity to African people in particular, and people of black descent in general. First published in Gikuyu with passages in Kiswahili[1], this Afro-centric novel proves an alternative to the Eurocentric construct of African narratives (M. Araùjo & S.R. Maeso, 2012). Although written in English, the version at stake in this study operates a form of 'patricide' as it initiates a head-on confrontation with the condescending stand of Western languages. There ensues an overt deconstructive momentum that spreads through the characters, the language, spatial and temporal instances, and the story as well. As these aspects intertwine to provide an overall local flavor to the narrative, they imprint new forms and semantics to the imperial

[1] It was initially published in Gikuyu language under the same title in 1987; the English version came in 1989 in African Writers Series: https://www.librarything.com/work/296354

language, raising the concept of liminality (A.R. Chakraborty, 2006). The liminal space, thus created, functions as an aesthetic of both resistance and revolution. This paper works out the mechanisms by which the novel achieves that literary construction, following a three-fold articulation. The first underscores the liminal as a "transcultural space in which strategies for personal and communal selfhood may be elaborated" (K. Moles, 2007, p.49). The second exemplifies instances of abrogation and appropriation (B. Ashcroft et al., 2007, pp.3-4), and other techniques, whereby the novelist constructs the liminal. The last part reads the interstitial spaces in *Matigari* as revolutionary venues. The writer's stand – encompassed chiefly in postcolonial reclaims for cultural justice – ultimately displays humanism.

1- Conceptualizing the Liminal

The English version of Ngugi's *Matigari* is conspicuous with its breach in the writing canon of the metropolitan and colonial literature. The Marxist-inspired quest (R. Mwetulundila, 2016) for social justice of the eponymous character, Matigari, in neo-colonial Kenya culminates in a narrative of self, cultural, and socio-political reclamations. The writing strategies of this peculiar form of narrative go through the concepts of abrogation and appropriation, which, indeed foreground the notion of liminality in postcolonial studies.

Deriving from the Latin "limen", meaning "threshold", the term "liminal" was first used in psychology in 1884 (A.R. Chakraborty, Op.cit, 145). This term was later used in 1909 by ethnologist Arnold Van Gennep to "refer to a state of 'in between-ness' during cultural and religious rites" (M. Sharma, 1999, 109-110). Gennep expands the meaning of this term assuming that 'the passage from one social position to another is identified with a *territorial passage*, such as the entrance into a village or a house, the movement from one room to another, or the crossing of streets or squares' (Ibid., 110).

Yet, the term "liminal" or "liminality" gained true scholarship with Victor Turner with *The Ritual Process* (1969) and *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors* (1974). Turner uses Gennep's religious ritual assumption to explain the change that the individual and the society go through. He finds out that "human social life is characterized by an alternation between structured social roles and the blurring of social roles (i.e., anti-structure) which occurs in the ritual context" (R.A. Chakraborty, Op.cit, 147). He, therefore, contends that 'attributes of liminality or of liminal personae ('threshold people') are necessarily ambiguous since this condition and these people elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural spaces' (cited in M. Sharma, 110).

Turner concludes that the "ritual transitional phase" induced by liminality is vital in the human's understanding of his humanity and his spirituality. This understanding comes out of the dialectical process between the continuity of life provided by social structures and the discontinuity engendered by the "in-between" space or phase, which, ultimately, turns out to be an anti-structure (Ibid.).

The concept of liminality covers a wide range of areas, ranking from disciplines such as "art (for example *Rites of Passage* by Stephen Greenblatt at the Tate Gallery), architecture (Smith, 2001), philosophy (Foucault, 1998), psychology (Freud) [to] social theory (Hetherington, 1998; Shield, 1992)" (K. Moles, 2007, 54). In all these fields and "ways of looking at the world," liminality stands "a discourse in-between two positions or the juxtaposition of a dominant idea with a marginal discourse" (Ibid.).

This "in-between" locus is aptly exploited by cultural theorist Homi K Bhabha to address Eurocentrism, and specifically the ensuing centre/periphery construct that debases a larger portion of world cultures. Bhabha, indeed, shapes his concept of liminality out of the cultural taxonomy which posits dominant Western 'universalism' over colonized, debased, and marginalized cultures. In *Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha portrays cultural liminality as "a transitory, in-between state or space" (R.A. Chakraborty, 145).

"The threshold concepts", involving "cognate labels like the liminal, the interstitial and the in-between" (J. Wilson & D. Tunca, 2015, p.1), and indeed the threshold itself, theoretically shape a conciliatory avenue for the dynamics of perpetual re-definition of identities. In postcolonial literature, the liminal space thus induced questions the concept of fixity. Caryl Phillips underscores the imperial implication of this concept as follows: 'race and ethnicity are the bricks with which the British have traditionally built a wall around the perimeter of their island notion and created fixity' (Cited in C. Duboin, 2011, 14). It appears, therefore, evident that the concept of fixity be considered central to colonial discourse, despite its ambivalent uses. K.M. Newton (1997, 293) supports this view, contending that "fixity as a sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition."

Expounding Bhabha's conception, Derek Hook sees fixity as "a kind of 'buttoning-down' of otherness, a normalization of difference, [which] is an attempt to instantiate notions of racial purity, to maintain ostensibly mutually-exclusive identity categories for colonizer and colonized (2005, 705). As he further states, Bhabha "claims" fixity to be "a vital component within the ideological construction of otherness, which not only marks off the boundaries of cultural, and racial difference, but does so in ways that are both essentializing and paradoxical" (Ibid, 5). Bhabha's conception of the liminal is informed by the inherent contradiction within the colonial discourse, which foregrounds the colonial construction of the *colonised* and their *cultures*. Bhabha sees this inner contradiction as a form of ambivalence within the colonial ideology. It is, indeed, this ambivalence, and all other shortcomings in the colonial discourse that underline Bhabha's concern for the concept of liminality. For the "limitations of [these] linguistic and philosophical representations and their potential to mask the ambivalence of the representation between the coloniser and the colonised" (Moles, Op.cit, 45) are convoked in this "third space of enunciation, which makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process" (H.K. Bhabha, 1994, 37).

There originates Bhabha's approach to the concept of hybridity for self, and culture as a whole. This term "hybridity", which J. Kuortti and Y. Nyman parallel with the concept of "métissage", is said to "be connected to the discourses of the biological sciences" (2007, p.4). "The hybrid" which, according to them, "is commonly thought to be a cross between two different species (botanical or animal)" turns out to bear a negative charge, "owing to colonial ideologies of race emphasizing the alleged purity of the white colonizers" (Ibid.). Thus, "while hybridization suggests 'fertilization against natural tendencies,' métissage was once used to refer to 'the hybridization of human beings implicating a distinction into different races'" (Ibid).

Yet, it is in its most constructive implication as a concept – which "foregrounds complicated entanglements rather than identity, togetherness-in-difference rather than separateness and virtual apartheid… a concept that prevents the absorption of all difference into a hegemonic plane of sameness and homogeneity" (I. Ang, 2003, 141) – that Bhabha seizes hybridity to expand his conception of liminality. For the 'forth-and-back' movement implied by the interstitial encounter between self/communal identities and cultures disrupts "fixity" and "essentialization" which set cultural differences and hierarchies. Bhabha substantiates his view basing on African-American artist Renée Green's metaphor of the stairwell as a liminal space in "museum building". He contends that,

> The stairwell as liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the upper and the lower, black and white. The hither and thither of the stairway, the temporal movement and passage it allows, prevent identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed and imposed hierarchy. (Bhabha, Op.cit, 4)

The cultural hybridity inherent to the concept of liminality in postcolonial studies informs Ngugi's novel on various points. First of all, as a cultural production from an erstwhile colony – and following S.E. Ogude's logic that "any African work of art that has any value as a work of art" should reflect Africa's humiliating contact with the West (1990, 6) – Ngugi's novel posits its "textuality" as hybrid. Yet, in its subtle deployment in *Matigari*, the concept of liminality debunks Eurocentric worldview, and thereafter, connotes resistance to linguistic, cultural, and racial supremacy. Characters' names in *Matigari* display features of this cultural undertone of the liminal space.

2- Names as Interstices of Resistance in *Matigari*

Just as the performance of initiation rituals generates both a geographical and metaphorical interstice in sacred societies especially (Van Gennep cited in M. Sharma, Op.cit, 110), so English and Gikuyu/Kiswahili languages create a third space for self-alchemy as they come across in *Matigari*. Being the major tool of British imperialism worldwide, English is erected on a pedestal as official language in most African Anglophone states. This hegemonic status – a legacy of

colonization, but still more a testimony to neo-colonial control (S.K. Hamburg, 2017) – suffers rivalry in Ngugi's novel.

It all started with the ignorance of English as the "medium of instruction" in his country (L. Athiemoolam & A. Kibui, 2012, 1) when the author chose to publish *Matigari* in Gikuyu, his African mother tongue, in 1986 in the first place (X. Garnier, 2011, 422). The book's dedication rather does justice to the author's aspiration: "this book is dedicated to …all those committed to the development of literature in the languages of all of the African peoples" (1988). This deliberate departure from the colonial language, which until then had cemented the writer's literary production, denotes not solely a denial or a challenge, but above all a resolute claim for personal and community identity. Subsequently, the Gikuyu version foregrounds that reclaim as it defies fixity and rigidity, idiosyncratic of essentialism in the English-borne colonial discourse (A. Bell, 2004, 21).

Yet, Ngugi's proleptic move therein bears all the patronizing seeds of the West's linguistic imperialism (H.K. El-qassaby, 2015, 1) in Africa. The eponymous hero, Matigari, exemplifies this trend to embed linguistic, cultural and historical pride, which tends to degenerate into abusive excess. His disproportionate sense of patriotism – anything that raises an onomastic interest, his full name reading "Matigari ma Njiruungi," that is, "The patriot who survived the bullets" (p.20) – leads to public conceit and melodramatic mayhems. From this very name down to the protagonist's mindset, wordings, deeds and feelings, to the rationale behind the narrative, down still to the post-colonial society depicted in the novel, everything reeks of liminality, even with the work in the African 'vernacular'.

For the reader, like me, who does not know Gikuyu, the implication of the name of the protagonist suffices to show that the text fails to inscribe true "Gikuyuness." Indeed, the eponymous hero of the novel owes his very name, at least in its semantic capture, to the rise of a national conscience under the push of a foreign intrusion, namely British colonization. This colonial influence on African novels is highlighted by Anna Pöysä (2011), who for the matter mentions Chimamanda Adichie (2009) as follows: "…The Professor told me that my characters [are] too much like him, an educated and middle class man. My characters drove cars. They were not starving. Therefore they were not authentically African" (p.22). Matigari's patriotism, the foundation of the kennings that serve as personal designation in Gikuyu, denotes prior presence of an opposite force to the realization of the national ideal. Although it is not overtly uttered, this "enmity" lies ubiquitous in the subconscious mind of the group that subsequently formulates the savior's name.

The name, thereafter, loses the essentialist aspect one could expect in the local language version. It eventually turns out to be the product of the liminal space wherein enemy forces intertwine involuntarily to beget it in the first place. "Those who resisted the bullets" only happens to come into being at the interstitial space where conflicting interests from Western colonialism and

indigenous African norms meet. Therefore, no matter the version (English or Gikuyu) Matigari, as a name and a character, turns out to be the fruit of a third space of enunciation.

This onomastic inscription of the liminal enlarges especially to characters who assist the "epic hero" – following F.O. Balogun's "Traditional African oral epic narrative" paradigm (1995, 129) – in his quest throughout the novel. Indeed, Muriuki, Guthera, and to a lesser extent Ngaruro wa Kiriro, are names-concepts born from the on-going cultural turmoil provoked by the superposition of British hegemonic worldview over Gikuyu tradition. This chaotic encounter engenders a third space of enunciation in terms of temporal, spatial and discursive stances.

Pronounced "/MOH-ree-oh-key/" and meaning "One who is reborn"[2] in Gikuyu, Matigari's young male-assistant owes his name (Muriuku) to the neocolonial context of post-independent Kenya. This name is part of Gikuyu cultural heritage, and means "The one who is resurrected," as testified by Emmanuel Kariuki's 2016 survey on Kikuyu names. Yet, its relevance in *Matigari* opens a new semantic field as it matches that African tradition with European cosmogony. The "resurrected," here, while justifying naming culture – according to which "no one really dies among the Kikuyu since he or she is likely to be reincarnated in his grandchildren or brother's children" (E. Kariuki, Op.cit) – traces back to the miraculous resurrection of Christian Saints, especially Jesus Christ (T. Whalen, 2010, 15). This cultural equivalence might well appease or obliterate the conflicting interests in the liminal space. Yet, it is this very seeming resemblance that fuels the liminal. For interpretation of the concept of resurrection varies according to each of the conflicting traditions. In the Gikuyu context "resurrection" is a deliberate and reproducible act performed within the family line to keep memories of those (ancestors or elders) who lived before present generations, be they still alive or dead (E Kariuki, Op.cit).

Resurrection connotes differently in Western civilization. According to Anil Nagaraj et al (2013, p.171) "Christians believe that when a person dies their soul would sleep in the grave along with their corpse. The soul sleep continues until a time in the future known as the 'last day' or also known as 'the final judgement.'" That has given rise to the myth of "bodily" or "physical resurrection of Jesus Christ" (N.L. Geisler, 1989; P. David, 2015), which obviously differs from the Gikuyu's concern for lineage survival through the naming after elders. While the Gikuyu rendition of the concept of resurrection proves secular in the first place, the West's shows metaphysical, and pertains to the lot of the Christian doctrines that Reverend D.J. Sanborn conceives as "Catholic dogmas" (2011, 1).

The characterization of Guthera follows the same liminal logic in the novel. Initially, Guthera's portraiture validates Kessler's premise about Ngugi's progressive empowerment of the woman in successive novels (J.N. Sitwala, 233). Rising from "self-ignorance" to "awareness, assurance and self-reliance" (Ibid.) through prostitution, Guthera goes through Ngugi's legendary ritual of rebirth that propels the woman to the vanguard of social struggle against neocolonial exploitation.

---

[2] NameSite.com, culture and meaning: http://www.namesite.com/content/muriuki , accessed on September 6, 2018

Guthera, hereafter, benefits from that "threshold rite" to evolve into "the pure" one (*Matigari*, 129). Yet, following the messianic stand of Matigari, Guthera owes her stand mostly to the biblical Mary Magdalene, the repented prostitute who, ultimately, became a major figure in Jesus Christ's mission on earth (G.J. Kent, 2010, 14).

Flanked on either side by spiritual symbols denoted from names, Matigari can reasonably endorse the function of the African traditional priest, and perform the ritual of redemption of post-independent Kenya. Yet, visibly, Ngugi's champion displays syncretic features in his spiritual stand. For the author's muse tends to derive from an amalgamation of African traditional cosmogony and Western spiritual philosophies, instilled in the African psyche through colonialism. And although both cultural heritages are legible in aforementioned characters, none can reasonably claim originality and monopoly over them. The heroes supposed to instill a revolutionary impetus in the exploited masses of post-colonial Kenya, thereafter, largely stand as *threshold* constructs.

Therefore, regardless of the version (Gikiyu or English) of Ngugi's political "story" (*Matigri*, ix) – and although its foremost aim is an end to the capitalistic exploitation of the human in Africa – *Matigari* inherently proves to be a liminal narrative. Liminality here *reverts* its full ritualistic function as it attempts to purify Eurocentric fixity. It also mitigates essentialism in the African novel. Lastly, liminality works for the advent of a new order in post-independent Kenya. Seen from this perspective, the liminal reinforces the *revolutionary* nature of *Matigari*.

3- The Liminal as a Revolutionary Venue in *Matigari*

The long-heated debates about colonialism and neo-colonialism, and their actual motives around the world find a fertile ground in Ngugi's *Matigari*. First meant for the African audience, especially for the Gikuyu tribe, the novel bears the characteristics of a true revolutionary manifest in its subversive rationale and provocative tone. Matigari's commitment to a complete liberation of *his* people provides a rebellious mood to the narrative in the first place.

As largely discussed above, Ngugi's onomastic technique portends a crisis in the development of his hero's story. Indeed, as the narrative proceeds, the insidious tensions expertly camouflaged in the names of the characters gradually disclose various antagonisms. Yet, two major oppositions intertwine to web the revolutionary stuff of the story. One learns, indeed, immediately from the introduction of Ngaruro wa Kiriro that a strike is about to start in the plastic factory (p.19). That pending confrontation features the union of workers, dissatisfied with their working conditions and incomes, and their employers, reportedly disregardful of the general welfare of their workforce.

That first crisis combines with the protagonist's relentless quest for "justice and peace" to foretell an explosive vortex by the end the narrative. Blurred with a figurative language at the start of the novel, Matigari's aspiration and its inherent societal tension gradually evolve with clarity as he challenges, in turn, the mainstays of the new order of his society. Matigari faces his first

opposition with the street-children, who threw stones at him (pp.16-17). Interpreting this act as a direct consequence of on-going decay in his society, Matigari condones, and even overlooks it. He nevertheless announces the mainstream antagonism ahead when, through vivid imagery, he opposes the luxury enjoyed by foreign companies (p.14) with the misery of his "children […] scattered all over the country" (p.15).

Still, at that level, the reader is not yet clearly situated about the actual belligerents of the impending battle. Matigari's contention with Settler William and his suite showed a true antagonistic situation. Matigari eventually triumphed, killing both William and John Boy, his maid. The protagonist's task becomes harder with a virtual target as he unearths his fighting arsenal. He attacks, in turn, the police, the "Minister for justice and truth", the heirs to Settler William and John Boy, and the country's authorities as a whole.

Matigari's confusion is inherent to the dual liminal spaces he manifests. His own liminal stand has largely been discussed above. The other aspect is that Matigari lives in a time and space created by the intersection between indigenous Africa and European imperialism. This temporal and spatial paradigm turns out to be an interstice, characterized by "indeterminacy, ambiguity, hybridity…" (R.A. Chakraborty, 145). Matigari's confused quest is, therefore, contingent to his own being, but also to the socio-historical context it gestates in.

Yet, that indeterminacy alone can hardly blur Matigari's aspiration. So much so that on roughly identifying the antagonistic forces, a twofold revolutionary stance informs the construct of the liminal in the novel. Variously theorized, the concept of revolution finds a most extensive deployment in Marxian literature. Basing on Reinhart Koselleck's perception of the "concept" of revolution as a 'linguistic act of our modernity,' (2017, 41), Ken Cheng attempts to retrace its origin and uses over the years. He agrees with Koselleck that, "the term was originally a 'naturalistic metaphor' that framed political changes as part of an eternal "circular course" in history, and was closely linked to the notion of 'civil war' as an ephemeral conflict between different strata of a fixed social order" (pp.46-47). Citing Koselleck, Cheng pursues that,

> It was only with the advent of political, social, and philosophical "modernity" – gestating in eighteenth-century Enlightenment thought and unleashed dramatically by the 1789 French Revolution – that "revolution" took on the sense of an absolute break from the "senseless circling" of the past, a transformation that 'open[s] up a new vista in the course of 'human history.' (p.41)

Interpretations of that "absolute breaks" essentially fuel the various Marxian conceptions of revolution. For some, like Vladimir Ilich Lenin (1918), who claim authenticity in their reading of Marx and Engels' doctrine, the concept of revolution is indissociable with that of "violence." This violence is inherent to the exploited proletariat's process of seizure of "state power" and "abolition" of the exploiting bourgeoisie (p.9). Lenin, who in the light of this interpretation later held an iron grip around his own people after the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, apprehends the

Marxian doctrine for a “classless society” as a “panegyric on violent revolution” (p.12). To substantiate his stand, he quotes from Engels as follows:

> ‘…That force [violence), however, plays yet another role [other than that of a diabolical power] in history, a revolutionary role; in the words of Marx, it is the midwife of every old society which is pregnant with a new one, that is the instrument with which social movement forces its way through and shatters the dead, fossilized political forms...’ (p.13)

Reducing any other Marxian conception of revolution to “crudest forms” of ideological distortions by “petty-bourgeois and philistine professors and publicists” (p.2), Lenin concludes that “this view of violent revolution lies at the root of the entire theory of Marx and Engels.” (p.13)

Following this Marxian revolutionary framework, Matigari features the “irreconcilability of class antagonisms” (Lenin, p.2). The antagonistic classes captured in the novel, indeed, align with those that sustain Marxist orthodoxy, and whose praxis turns out to be the opposition between “discontented masses of the proletariat and petty-bourgeois” and “the French monarchy” during the Commune (P.A.P. Pereira, 2013, p.52). Ngugi forms his class antagonism putting on the one hand “the imperialists and their retinue of messengers, overseers, police and military,” and on the other, “the camp of the working people” (*Matigari*, p.161). The latter group includes all the hapless composed of street children, workers for the plastic plant, prostitutes, student unionists, intellectuals, the unemployed, peasants, and the all paupers of the country. He then charges Matigari with embodying the revolutionary ideal of this “discontented” social class.

Yet, the actual revolution worth noting tends to be the inescapable change framed in the transitory posture of the protagonists. Indeed, both the characters and the context manifest an interstitial pattern as a combination of indigenous African values and imposed foreign ways. The socio-historical background of the story, as well as the people who animate it, represent the spatial, temporal and cultural hybridity, which, inherently, bears a “potential for subversion and change” (Chakraborty, Op.cit, p.145).

Ngugi’s creative technique, thereafter, induces the revolution which eventually breaks out by the end of the narrative. The liminal space thus created, inexorably gestates revolutionary seeds for the birth of a new order, in a new space. And magical realism helps reach that end even more. This substantiates Malika Bouhadiba’s contention, which reads Ngugi’s resort to magical realism as a designed plan to “drive home his revolutionary message to the *grassroots*” (2016, p.1). For as Bouhadiba pursues, “magical realism has often been used to call for revolutionary *praxis* by Latin American writers” (Ibid).

From this perspective, Ngugi’s novelistic aesthetic alone could suffice to address his revolutionary ideal. Expressing it through Matigari’s political activism, and coating it with a Marxist doctrine, proves that Ngugi targets a multifarious audience. Both intellectuals – able to

decrypt the literary intricacies – and the masses of the people are, indeed, committed to the necessary task of freeing the country of its deviant capitalist inclination.

And although the masses of the people do not react until Matigari's final assault against the exploitative symbols, they stand supportive of his revolutionary move from the start. Ngugi compensates his failure to generate a collectively organized uprising against the exploiters, as recommended in Marxism, with intertextual artistry. He merges, indeed, the Mau-Mau rebellion – said to have influenced the "timing of decolonisation in Kenya" (Hilda Nissimi, 2006, p. 3) – with his Marxist-Leninist aspiration for his people. In so doing, Ngugi unwillingly generates a third space where different revolutionary orthodoxies fuse. Therefore, his revolutionary momentum proves manifold.

The onomastic technique, discussed above, actually becomes consistent with the revolutionary essence that those names encompass. The interstitial nature of those names paces up with the salvation mission with which they are charged. Sensing the betrayal of the African elite years after independence, Ngugi chooses his revolutionary heroes among the commoners. Matigari is not an intellectual like "Jomo Kenyatta, the alleged leader of the Mau Mau" (Nissimi, 2006, p.7). He is rather portrayed as one of those peasants who rebelled against the colonial administration under the leadership of Jomo Kenyatta.

This symbolic form of liminal collocates with and inhabits a setting, which proves to be a threshold space itself in the novel. The context of Matigari's quest for "peace and justice" (*Matigari*, p.) is, indeed, set in a time when Africa experiences a new turn in its history, as it is forcibly drawn to *coexist* with Western norms. By the way, ever-growing capitalist practices, inherited from colonialism, threaten Africa's communalist way of living. Western companies, with the complicity of post-independent African leaders, exploit, expropriate, and pauperize African masses. These masses of the people, therefore, get at a loss. This is, indeed, the time and space of "confusion and indeterminacy" that informs Chakraborty's conception of liminality. This confusing context, itself a product and a manifestation of the interstitial space, calls for "change," following Chakraborty's symmetry. Ngugi's revolution, therefore, stands in line with the logic of ritualistic change induced by the liminal space in sacred societies. For any initiation is a change in state, a revolution of a kind.

Conclusion

This analysis has permitted to shed light on the resisting and revolutionary nature of the liminal space. Through a cogent onomastic aesthetic, a skillful appeal to "magical realism", intertextuality, transgenericity, and plurilingualism, Ngugi has successfully created diverse liminal spaces in his novel. These spaces eventually combine to counterpoise Eurocentrism in post-colonial Africa. The frictions engendered by the irreconcilability of these interstitial spaces generate a revolutionary atmosphere, in the long run. In the neocolonial context of *Matigri*, this liminal space, ultimately, turns out to be a venue for the capitalistic exploitation of African

masses. Therefore, it naturally appeals for a societal revolution, following Ngugi's Marxist-Leninist revolutionary inclination.

Bibliography

Ang, Ien (2003), "Together-in-difference: Beyond Diaspora, into Hybridity" in *Asian Studies Review*, 27 (2), pp. 141-154

Araùjo, Marta & Silvia Roodrigues Maeso (2012), "History Textbooks, Racism and the Critique of Eurocentrism: beyond Rectification or Compensation" in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol.35, N°7, pp.1266-1286

Ascroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (2007), *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (Second edition), Routledge

Athiemoolam, Logamurthie & Agnes Kibui (2012), "An Analysis of Kenyan Learners' Proficiency in English Based on Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary" in *Journal of NELTA*, Vol. 17, N° 1-2, pp. 1-13

Balogun, F. Odun (1995), ''*Matigari*: An African Novel as an Oral Narrative Performance'' in *Oral Tradition*, N°10/1, pp.129-165

Bell, Avril (2004), "Relating Maori and Pakeha: the Politics of Indigenous and Settler Identities" (Doctorate Thesis in Sociology), Massey University

Bhabha, Homi K. (1994), *The Location of Culture*, London and New York, Routledge

Bouhadiba, Malika (2016), "Magical Realism for Revolutionary Didactic Purposes in Ngugi's *Matigari*", in *Arab World English Journal*, volume 7, Number 1, pp.194-202

Chakraborty, Arup Rattan (2016), "Liminality in Post-Colonial Theory: A Journey from Arnold van Gennep to Homi K. Bhabha" in *Anudhyan: An International Journal of Social Sciences (IJSS)*, pp.145-153

Cheng, Ken (2017) "Proletarian Revolution and the Crisis of Modernity: German Orthodox Marxism and French revolutionary Syndicalism, 1889-1914", PHD Thesis Dissertation

Duboin, Corinne (2011), "Contested Identities: Migrant Stories and Liminal selves in Andrea Levy's Small Island" in *Obsidian* III, 12 (1), pp. 14-33

Garnier, Xavier (2011), "Ecrire en gikuyu pour révéler la réalité néocoloniale : L'expérience de Ngugi wa Thiong'o dans Murogi wa kagogo (2004-2007) », in *Revue de littérature comparée*, vol. 4, N°340, pp.410-422

Geisler, Norman L. (1989), "The Significance of Christ's Physical Resurrection", in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, pp.148-170

Hamburg, Sarah K. (2007), "Linguistic Imperialism and Volunteer English Teaching: A Neo-colonial Practice?" *Undergraduate theses and Professional Papers*, 166 pages

Hook, Derek (2005), "The Racial Stereotype, Colonial Discourse, Fetishism, and Racism", in *Psychoanalytic review*, vol.92, N°5, pp. 701-734

El-qassaby, Huda Kamal (2015), "Linguistic Imperialism and Reshaping the World's New Identity: A Research Paper in Linguistics" in *International Journal of Language and Linguistics*, vol.3, N° 2, pp. 61-68

Kent, Greenville J. (2010), "Mary Magdalene, Mary of Bethany and the Sinful Woman of Luke7: the Same Person?", in *Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary*, 13 (1), pp.13-28

Kuortti, Joel & Yopi Nyman (eds.) (2007), *Reconstructing Hybridity: Postcolonial Studies in Transition*, Amsterdam-New York, Rodopi

Lenin, Vladimir Ilich (1918), "The State and Revolution: The Marxist Theory of the State & the

Tasks of the Proletariat in the Revolution”, in *Collected Works*, Volume 25, pp.381-492
Moles, Kate (2013), *Narratives of Postcolonialism in Liminal Space: The Place Called Phoenix Park*, PhD Thesis, ProQuest LLC, Ann Arbor
Mwetulundila, Rauna (2016), “A Marxist Analysis of Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s Novel *Matigari*” in *International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Studies*, Volume 3, Issue 10, pp.26-32
Nagaraj, Anil Kumar Mysore, Raveesh Bevinahalli Nanjegowda, S. M. Purushothama (2013), “The Mystery of Reincarnation” in *Indian Journal of Psychiatry,* 55.Suppl 2: S171–S176
Newton, K.M. (1997), “Homi K. Bhabha: ‘The Other Question: The Stereotype and Colonial Discourse’”, in *Twentieth-Century Literary Theory*: a *Reader* (Second edition), New York, Macmillan Education
Ogude, S. E. (1990), “Ideology and Aesthetics: the African Dilemma,” in *Literature and Black Aesthetics*, Ibadan, Heinemann
Pöysä, Anna (2011), “The end of a Single Story? The Post-Colonial African Novel and Society,” in *Ocabo dos Trabalhos: Revista Electronica de Doutoramento do CES/FEUC/FLUC*/III, N°6
Pereira, Potyara A. P. (2013), “The Concept of Equality and Well-Being in Marx”, in *R. Katal., Florianopolis*, vol. 16, N°1, pp.47-56
Peter, David (2015), “The Resurrection of Our Lord.1 Corinthians 15:1-11. April 5, 2015 The Occasion for Paul’s Words,” in *Concordia Journal*, vol.41, N°1, Article 15, pp.71-72
Sharma, Mahesh (1999), “The Liminality of Contemporary Culture,” in *Bodhi: an Interdisciplinary Journal*, N°6 (1), pp. 109-119
Whalen, Tomas (2010), “The death and Resurrection: Necessary for Salvation?” in *The Review: A Journal of Undergraduate Student Research*, Volume 12, Article 6, pp.15-22
Wilson, Janet & Daria Tunca (2015), “Postcolonial Thresholds: Gateways and Borders,” in *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, vol. 51, N°1, pp.1-6

Webography

Kariuki, Emmanuel (2016), “Kikuyu Names for Boys and their meanings”: *https://wehavekids.com/parenting/Kikuyu-Names-for-boys*, accessed on September 6, 2018
Sanborn (Rev.), Donald J. (2011), “Modernism Resurrected: Benedict VI on the Resurrection,” in *Most Holy Trinity Seminary Newsletter:* *http://mostholytrinityseminary.org/SCSF%20April%202011.pdf*
Sitwala, Josephine Ntelamo (2018): *//repository.unam.edu.na/bitstream/handle/11070/2213/sitwala2018.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y*
Library Things: *https://www.librarything.com/work/296354*
NameSite.com, Culture and Meaning: *http://www.namesite.com/content/muriuki* , accessed on September 6, 2018