

Volume 2, Issue 2

Décembre 2024

e-ISSN: 2959-9407 (online)
p-ISSN: 3006-4392 (printed)



SINZANG

SCIENTIFIC JOURNAL OF LITERATURE, LANGUAGE,
COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES

Peleforo GON COULIBALY University

Côte d'Ivoire

www.revue-sinzang.net



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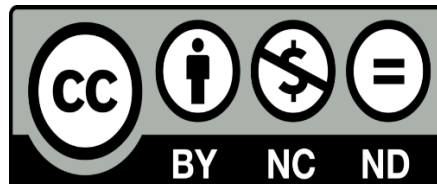
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SJIF 2024: 3.696



e-ISSN: 2959-9407 (online version)

P-ISSN: 3006-4392 (printed version)

EDITORIAL

Among the Senufos from the north of Côte d'Ivoire, the sacred grove is called "Sinzang". The first of these would date from the time of the patriarch and leader of Korhogo SORO Zouakagnon (1840-1894). It is the tutelary space of the initiatory institute of the secret society: the Poro. These sacred forests exist in all the villages of the region and are highly protected and managed. The proof is that in their midst, adolescents perform the rite of passage leading them to the age of maturity. The "Sinzang" is also the centre of intergenerational knowledge transmission. Thus, the teaching of ancestral knowledge, ontology and cosmogony-contributing to the future spiritual, moral and social formation of the Senufo elite-is associated with this pantheon.

In line with this pedagogical and academic logic, the SINZANG Journal aims to promote African and Western humanities in Literature, Language, Communication and Education Sciences. To do this, it is part of a process of promoting the reflections and studies conducted by Teachers-Researchers and Researchers for the sustainable development of society.

As distinctive signs of "Sinzang", Jacqueline DELANGE, in *Arts et peuple Sénoufo de l'Afrique noire*, identifies among others the huts, earth cones and statues (masks). The visual identity of this magazine presents two masks, one symbolizing ancestral knowledge and the other Western science. The two facing the entrance of a sacred hut express the encounter of diverse knowledge put at the service of humanity. *In fine*, they export to other horizons, hence the idea of huts in perspective.

SINZANG is a pluridisciplinary and biannual peer-reviewed scientific journal. It is published in English and French but also accepts work written in German and Spanish. Moreover, depending on the requests made at the discretion of its review committee, it may issue special thematic publications and conference proceedings.

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ÉDITORIAL

Chez les Sénoufos du nord de la Côte d'Ivoire, le bosquet sacré est communément appelé « Sinzang ». Les premiers du genre dateraient de l'époque du patriarche et chef de Korhogo SORO Zouakagnon (1840-1894). C'est l'espace tutélaire de l'institut initiatique de la société secrète : le Poro. Lieux fortement protégés et aménagés à l'envi, ces forêts sacrées existent dans tous les villages de la région. La preuve en est qu'en leur sein, les adolescents effectuent le rite de passage les amenant à l'âge de la maturité. Le « Sinzang » est aussi le haut lieu de la transmission de la connaissance intergénérationnelle. Ainsi, l'enseignement du savoir ancestral, de l'ontologie et la cosmogonie- contribuant à la formation spirituelle, morale et sociale de l'élite Sénoufo de demain-est associé à ce panthéon.

S'inscrivant dans cette logique pédagogique et académique, la Revue SINZANG ambitionne de faire la promotion des humanités tant africaine qu'occidentale dans le domaine de la Littérature, des Sciences du Langage, de la Communication et de l'Éducation. Pour ce faire, elle s'inscrit dans une démarche de vulgarisation des réflexions et des études menées par les Enseignants-Chercheurs et des Chercheurs pour le développement durable de la société.

Comme signes distinctifs du « Sinzang », Jacqueline DELANGE, dans *Arts et peuple Sénoufo de l'Afrique noire*, identifie entre autres les cases, les cônes en terre et les statues (masques). L'identité visuelle de cette revue présentant deux masques, l'un symbolisant le savoir ancestral et l'autre la science occidentale. Les deux se faisant face à l'entrée d'une case sacrée expriment la rencontre de connaissances diverses mis au service de l'humanité. In fine, elles s'exportent vers d'autres horizons ; d'où l'idée des cases en perspective.

SINZANG est une revue pluridisciplinaire à comité de lecture et scientifique. Elle est bilingue : éditée en anglais et en français. Mais elle accepte également les travaux écrits en allemand et en espagnol. C'est une revue semestrielle, tenant deux parutions l'an. Au demeurant, elle peut procéder, selon les demandes ou les sollicitations formulées à l'appréciation de son comité de lecture, à des parutions spéciales thématiques et à la diffusion d'actes de colloque.

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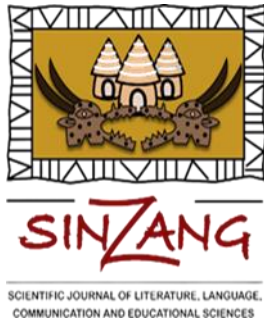
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UTOPIA AND DYSTOPIA IN THE POST-COLONIAL NARRATIVES OF NGUGI WA THIONG'O'S *MATIGARI*

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Abstract: This article chronicles the utopian vision of the Kenyan Society and their disillusionment after self-regaining in *Matigari* (1987), a novel written by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. By choosing an idealistic protagonist who believes in a radical change for Kenyan society he exposes his utopian vision post-colonial society plagued by corruption and inequality. The new political elites, who replaced the colonial oppressors, are shown to perpetuate similar injustices for personal gain. By using narratology, the aim of this work is to decipher the failure of many post-colonial governments on realising their promises and therefore betraying the expectations and hopes of their people.

Keywords : *disillusionment - idealism - injustice - modernization - post-colonialism.*

L'UTOPIE ET LA DYSTOPIE DANS LE RECIT POST-COLONIAL DE *MATIGARI* DE NGUGI WA THIONG'O

Résumé : Cet article relate la vision utopique de la société kenyane et sa désillusion après la reconquête de soi dans *Matigari* (1987), un roman écrit par Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. En choisissant un protagoniste idéaliste qui croit en un changement radical pour la société kenyane, il expose sa vision utopique d'une société postcoloniale en proie à la corruption et aux inégalités. Il apparaît que les nouvelles élites politiques, qui ont remplacé les oppresseurs coloniaux, perpétuent des injustices similaires à des fins personnelles. En utilisant la narratologie, le but de ce travail est de décrypter l'échec de nombreux gouvernements postcoloniaux à tenir leurs promesses et donc à trahir les attentes et les espoirs de leurs peuples.

Mots clés : *désillusion - idéalisme - injustice - modernisation - post-colonialisme.*

Introduction

In the wake of the independence era in Africa, quite all the population had great expectations for their country. Most scholars believed in the new leaders. Perse, the new leadership even believed in a positive transformation of ex-colonies for the good of the masses. In the eyes of the emerging regimes, the decolonial period should see the occurrence of fair and equitable communities in all the burgeoning African states. For them, given the obsolescence of the colonial rule, newly-independent African countries should be likened to utopian societies where all dreams come true, all people

have answers to their ills. Thus, the end of colonization with African leaders mounting the throne symbolizes the rise of perfect and ideal states all over Africa. The masses together with the intellectuals believed that the hard-fought decolonization could on no account be misled because their leaders perfectly knew the foibles of the colonial rule and did not want to replicate them.

Yet, the management of power by our leaders proved that theory and practice are two antinomic realities. The ruling of national affairs by new leaders did not live up to the expectations of the masses. Instead of striving for the occurrence of an equitable society as promised, the ruling class promoted ills such as clientelism, prevarication, despotism. Those who profit from the system are parents, friends and close relations while the masses are left in hunger, pauperization and destituteness. The utopian society constructed in the decolonial imagination gave way to a dystopian world, that of disenchantment and disillusionment.

Critical works labored issues related to post-colonial Africa in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *Matigari*. D. Kasimi's article (2009) entitled « *Matigari de Ngugi wa Thiong'o: pour une poésie de la violence* ». It critically examines the pervasive injustices within the Kenyan society, emphasizing the character of Matigari as a symbolic representation of the violent means that individuals perceive as necessary to achieve social justice. Kasimi argues that Matigari's actions reflect a broader societal disillusionment, where the absence of equitable systems drives the protagonist to resort to violence as the only viable solution to societal inequality and oppression.

Another work on *Matigari* is Rauna Mwetulundila's « *A Marxist analysis of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's Novel Matigari* (2016) whereby the author labours in Kenya. He stresses on revolution to bring social changes through the character Matigari. These two articles have in common the disillusionment of the masses in post-independence Africa. While Djiman's work emblemizes violence as a way to demonstrate people's disenchantment in post-colonial Africa, Mwetulundila is more engrossed with the desire for the masses to give in to revolution as a means to put an end to their disappointment about their mismanaged countries by African leaders.

The present article holds significance as it extends beyond Kasimi and Mwetulundila's analyses. Contrary to these articles which emphasize only one vision, that of disillusionment, this paper explores the transition from an initially utopian vision of society to a dystopian one. By tracing this shift, the article highlights the

evolving perceptions of justice and societal reform, shedding light on the complexities of idealism giving way to a more cynical understanding of societal structures. This progression underscores the broader implications of hope, disillusionment, and the challenges of realizing an equitable society.

The objective of this article is to reflect upon and analyze the binary opposition utopia and dystopia, the confrontation between an idealistic vision of society and its antonymic reality. For fact, this paper aims to underscore the failure of the new African elite to instate an idealistic society after the independences.

Narratology will serve as the literary theory for this study, insofar as it will allow us to develop a thorough and structured analysis of the subject at hand. According G. Gingembre (1966, p. 37), the use of narratology will consist in breaking down and examining the mechanisms of narration: « *l'analyse des composantes et des mécanismes du récit, qui présente une histoire transmise par l'acte narratif, la narration* ». So, by providing conceptual tools, this theory will facilitate a precise understanding of the narrative dynamics and the relationships between the various actants in the work being studied.

1. POST-COLONIAL UTOPIA: MATIGARI'S DREAM OF AN IDEALISTIC SOCIETY

The arrival of the new African leaders in power after the retirement of the colonial rule rhymed with the desire to instate a perfect society, free from injustice, suffering, and inequality. It is typically an imagined, idealized world that serves as a means to critique the imperfections of the present world. As defined this society is close in meaning to utopian societies. Such a society with an optimistic aspiration strives for the occurrence of more harmonious future. In other words, the dedication serves as an expression of gratitude, admiration and affection. It can be a way to acknowledge the support, inspiration, or love received from that individual, highlighting their importance in the author's personal or intellectual journey. Such dedications are deeply meaningful, as they both personalize the work and offer recognition to someone who played a vital role in the creation of the piece. This is the case of Ngugi's *Matigari* through his dedication section: «This novel is dedicated to all those who love a good story; and to all those who research and write on African orature ; and to all those committed to the development of literature in the languages of African peoples».

This utopia can be seen through the paratextual elements of *Matigari*. Gérard Genette defines paratext as : « *le renfort et l'accompagnement d'un certain nombre de productions, elles-mêmes verbales et non, comme un nom d'auteur, un titre, une préface, des illustrations, etc.* » (G. Genette, 1987 : 7). These elements capture the reader's attention during the first reading (C. Komenan, 2013, p. 27). The paratextual element concerned in this study is the dedication which is according to the conception of Pierre Nda (2007, p. 129) : « *un mot aimable en debut d'ouvrage, de mémoire ou de thèse à l'endroit d'une personne chère qu'on veut honorer* ».

Ngũgĩ's dedication holds deep meaning, especially in its call for the preservation and celebration of African orature, which he views as a cultural legacy that is rapidly fading. By urging people to write about African oral traditions, Ngũgĩ stresses the importance of capturing and passing on these practices before they are lost to future generations. He links the decline of orature to the enduring effects of colonial and post-colonial power structures, which have systematically marginalized indigenous forms of expression. The written word, often dominated by colonial languages and ideologies, has overshadowed the vibrant oral traditions that once formed the core of African societies. In this sense, Ngũgĩ's advocacy for orature is a vital attempt to reclaim and safeguard these cultural stories amidst the challenges posed by globalization and the diminishing influence of local languages and traditions.

In addition to promoting cultural preservation, Ngũgĩ's emphasis on the revival of African orature is also a statement of intellectual independence. By encouraging the documentation and celebration of indigenous traditions, he views this as a direct challenge to the legacy of cultural imperialism. For Ngũgĩ, writing African narratives in indigenous languages and revitalizing oral traditions are key to breaking the intellectual dependence on colonial languages and Western frameworks. This cultural reclamation not only empowers African communities to reclaim their own narratives but also allows them to regain control over the stories that have historically been shaped by external forces.

Therefore, Ngũgĩ's dedication is a reflection of his broader vision of decolonization, one that extends beyond political freedom to include a cultural and intellectual reassertion of African identity and agency. Through this dedication, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o aims to reassert the value of African languages, which he views as crucial to the cultural and intellectual independence of African societies. By advocating for the

use of indigenous languages in both spoken and written forms, Ngũgĩ underscores the foundational role these languages play in the construction of African identities, histories, and worldviews. For Ngũgĩ, African languages are far more than tools of communication. They are vital vessels through which African thought, culture, and worldview are expressed.

Ngũgĩ contends that the dominance of foreign languages especially those imposed during colonial rule has not only sidelined indigenous languages but also undermined African cultural practices and modes of knowledge. As such, revitalizing African languages is not merely a linguistic endeavor, but an act of cultural and intellectual resistance, reasserting the right of African peoples to define and narrate their own histories and traditions.

Ngũgĩ's focus on the revalorization of African languages is intricately tied to his broader project of decolonization of Africa. In his view, the continued dominance of colonial languages in African education, literature, and discourse perpetuates a form of intellectual subjugation, maintaining African societies' dependence on the cultural paradigms of their former colonizers. Through his advocacy for writing in African languages, Ngũgĩ seeks to break this intellectual dependency and promote a new, self-determined intellectual landscape. Ultimately, Ngũgĩ's call for the use of African languages is a call for the restoration of intellectual autonomy and the rejection of the cultural dominance imposed through the continued use of colonial languages.

The second paratextual element that is to be analysed is the title. L. Hoek (1981, p. 708) defines the title of a book as «a series of linguistic signs which can appear at the head of a text to designate it, to indicate its general content, and to appeal to the public». "*Matigari*", as a title, has thus been made the subject of this narrative. Genette (1988 : 709) then calls such a title "thematic" (in contrast to "rhematic") because it points to the subject or theme of the text". It is also the name of the protagonist in the novel. In this novel, the protagonist Matigari ma Nijiruungi, whose name means «the patriot who survived the bullets» (Ngũgĩ, 1987, p. 20) in Kikuyu, is a Messiah-like figure, a Mau Mau soldier who has returned from the forest where he fought for the independence of his nation and will find that his country has become corrupted and depraved. Besides, Ngũgĩ shows through his metaphorical title, the fighting spirit, the heroism of the Mau Mau fighters.

Here, «*the patriot who survived the bullets*», the meaning of his name is deep in meaning and is symbolic. A patriot in general and a Mau Mau soldiers are strong and have no fear. They were in war with the colonizer, the white settlers for the liberation of the country and many of them were killed in this fight but Matigari has survived "*the bullets*". This is a testimony of the power, the agility and the strength of his character. The use of the determiner "the" before "bullets" shows that this kind of bullet is clearly known by the narrator and there is then a familiarity that exist between Matigari and bullets as a very engaged, intrepid fighter.

Matigari's quest is driven by his desire to reunite with his family, rebuild his home, and create a peaceful future. He is accompanied by a young Kenyan boy and a Kenyan prostitute as they journey together in search of truth and justice, aiming to reclaim what he believes is rightfully his. As the story progresses, Matigari narrowly avoids danger on several occasions, and his image gradually becomes more legendary and symbolic. His fellow prisoners ask him a series of probing questions, such as :

Who is Matigari? They asked one another. How on earth are we going to recognize him? What does he look like? What nationality is he? Is Matigari a man or woman anyway? Is he young or old? Is he fat or thin? Is he real or just a figment of people's imagination? Who or what really is Matigari ma Nijiruungi? Is he a person, or is it a spirit? (Ngũgĩ, 1987, p. 66).

That is indeed clear enough in the readers' mind when one considers Taha point of view as he puts that: «The title sparks numerous questions, reflections, sensations, expectations and guesses which can find a consensual answer only in the body of the text, or more precisely with the help of the body of the text» (Taha, 2000, p. 71). Through the titling process, we believe that Ngũgĩ has fulfilled the functions of the title according to Hoek's definition in terms of designation of the book, indication of its content, and appeal to a readership. It has provided the reader with a means of internal reference to the body of the text and helped to identify the focus and intention of the author : Matigari. In essence, the story is set in a newly independent Kenya, as well as in other countries that have recently gained independence.

So, through the title, one can see that his journey represents the longing for a better future, one where the ideals of independence and dignity are fully realized. Throughout the novel, his search is driven by a vision of a society where the promises of liberation are fulfilled, and where the suffering of the oppressed is replaced by peace and prosperity. Thus, the title reflects Matigari's dream of returning to a world that has

not only physically liberated itself from colonial rulers but has also achieved a moral and social transformation.

The book cover, along with its accompanying artwork, is the second key element of the paratext that we will focus on in this analysis. It can be seen as the primary paratextual element that captures the reader's attention due to its outward appearance and visibility. As such, it is designed to be as bold and eye-catching as possible. In literary works like novels or short stories, this paratext is often paired with graphic and typographic design elements that amplify its visual impact and broaden its appeal.

The cover of the first edition of *Matigari* (1986) features an image of a man holding a weapon in his left hand, with one leg placed on the body of another man who lies on the ground, seemingly dead. The man standing is depicted as a Black figure, wearing a belt and armed with a war knife, which suggests that he is Matigari ma Njiruungi. This imagery conveys the idea that he has defeated and possibly killed the white colonizer, likely symbolized by Robert Williams. The name *Matigari ma Njiruungi* identifies the character as a former member of the Mau Mau resistance movement, which fought a guerrilla war against British colonial forces and ultimately played a key role in securing Kenya's independence.

Thus, this is clearly the schema of what really happens in the narrative. In the novel, Kenya is represented as a country in which there are two types of people. That is the patriots who are entirely the Kenyan of origin and the oppressors who are the white and some local people whose only objective is to satisfy the individual. Indeed, the patriots are those who are doing their best to save Kenya from destructive ideas of foreigners. While *Matigari* initially embodies the hope of a liberated Kenya, it quickly turned into a narrative of disillusionment, revealing the betrayal of post-colonial ideals. As Matigari's journey unfolds, it becomes evident that the very patriots who once fought for independence are now complicit in perpetuating the same injustices that characterized colonial rule, casting a shadow on the promises of freedom and equality.

2. DYSTOPIAN AFRICA: DISILLUSIONMENT AND BETRAYAL OF POST-COLONIAL IDEALS

In Ngugi's *Matigari*, the African society that is depicted is the like of dystopian societies where the management of public affairs by the local leadership is a total failure. It is a continent in crisis. It is a world where the expectations of the masses in

the wake of the independences prove deceitful. The dreams of African populations to see a continent well managed turn sour. By depicting a dystopian society, *Matigari* by Ngugi seems to be a disillusionment novel.

From the early stages of his journey, *Matigari* confronts a bitter reality. The novel illustrates how independence, far from being synonymous with the liberation of the African man, merely replaced one form of oppression with another. The "freedom" promised by the political leaders of the time turned out to be a mere substitution of masters, where the local elites, trained by colonialism, took up the practices of exploitation and domination.

Matigari realizes that the former freedom fighters, of whom he was once a part, are now marginalized and forgotten by those who have come to power. The old promise of land redistribution and wealth has been trampled upon in favor of a privileged elite allied with colonial and global powers. This betrayal of the ideals of the struggle for independence is symbolized by the character of *Matigari*, who is seen by some as a "madman" or a "myth," an idealist blinded by unrealistic dreams. This is clear in the following passage where the character *Matigari* and the others who were in prison were treated as madmen «The news was first heard at about 10 a.m. from the Voice of Truth. A group of patients had escaped from the mental hospital» (Ngugi, 1987, p. 131).

This part explores the continued exploitation and oppression of African people even after the departure of the colonizers. The original purpose of colonization was to subjugate indigenous populations and exploit the land's physical, human, and economic resources for the benefit of the colonizing power. When independence came, African people hoped for a better life, one marked by freedom and social progress. However, this great expectation was dashed by the corruption and mismanagement of the local elites. These elites, many of whom had been trained under colonial rule, continued to operate in much the same way as the former colonial masters, enforcing and perpetuating colonial values. This situation gave rise to what we now refer to as neocolonialism.

However, what does the term neo-colonialism really mean? Before going further, let's us define it in order to make its understanding clear. According to the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, neocolonialism is the political control by a rich country of a poorer country that should be independent and free to govern itself (especially former colonies) by the use of economic pressure, political suppression and

cultural dominance. Moreover, Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana, also addressed, defined, and elaborated on this phenomenon in his seminal book by saying that: «It is the existing of ongoing influence of the former colonialism powers, which persists after independence and in many cases is responsible for the excessive exploitation of African resources and inhibits are independent political policy». (Nkrumah, 1965, p. 21).

This passage underscores the continuing influence of colonial powers in the post-independence era, a phenomenon known as neocolonialism. Even after gaining formal political independence, many African countries remained subject to external interference, particularly through economic control and political pressure from former colonizers. The departure of colonial rulers did not eliminate this influence. Instead, it took on more covert forms, such as economic dependency, multinational corporations, and foreign aid that primarily benefited the former colonial powers. This ongoing control over resources and trade prevented African nations from achieving true sovereignty, as their economies were still shaped by external interests rather than the needs of their own populations.

Additionally, this external dominance undermined the political independence of African governments. Despite the theoretical right to self-determination, many African leaders found themselves pressured by former colonial powers and international organizations to align with foreign interests. Consequently, governments often adopted policies that favored external powers rather than the aspirations of their people, compromising the promises of independence. This persistent neocolonial relationship contributed to the ongoing political instability, economic inequality, and the continued exploitation of African resources.

Labour exploitation refers to the practice of employing workers under poor conditions and either paying them inadequately or not at all, which is morally unacceptable. This issue has been a persistent problem in both colonial and post-colonial African societies, drawing the attention of many postcolonial writers, who often use it as a central theme in their works. In *Matigari*, the narrator employs various literary techniques to depict the harsh, dehumanizing conditions that Kenyan, and more broadly African people endure. One example of this is seen in a passage that highlights the intervention of a worker, which serves to illustrate the exploitation faced by the laboring class :

I am workers (...) look at how the machines have sapped me of all strength. What is left of me ? Just bones .my skin withered even as I kept an assuming myself (...) what can I now expect when I retire ? Just a clock as a think you for long and loyal service my fortune ? Old age without a pension ? (Ngũgĩ, 1987, p. 59)

This passage reveals that workers are forced to endure extremely poor working conditions. It highlights a combination of brutal, often dehumanizing, circumstances in the workplace, alongside deceit. The interrogation «what can I now expect when I retire?» proves the deception of the worker who is underestimated by the employers who never care for their private life.

Furthermore, another proof of exploitation is seen through Muriuki when he says that: «Most of the things I have been doing so far have not spring from my being able to choose. I have been wearing blinker like a horse. Yes, I have never done anything which came from free choice. I have been moved here and there by time and place » (Ngũgĩ, 1987, p. 140). In essence, the post-independence era in Kenya was a time of great hardship for workers. They were subjected to hazardous and unhealthy working conditions, with constant pressure through threats and abuse, as described by Muriuki :

I have been moved here and there by time and place that is to say they had to obey to the extreme power which is owned by the master and have nothing in return for a handful of people still profited on the suffering of the majority, the sorrow of the many being the joy of the few ? (Ngũgĩ, 1987, p. 12)

Additionally, the theme of injustice is evident in the relationship between workers and their employers. Despite putting in long hours of hard labor in factories with the expectation of fair wages, workers were sadly denied proper compensation. As a result, they took to demonstrating to demand their rights and a better salary. This situation is vividly portrayed in the novel when Ngaruro Wa Kiriro was saying: «All we are asking for are wage increases to meet the ever-spiraling of goods. We are also asking that the wages be increased in proportion to the rate of the inflation» (Ngũgĩ, 1987, p. 51). In this sense, it can be said that, through *Matigari*, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o has the intention to influence anybody who is in this situation nowadays to revolt and claim for his right. That clearly proves that people are living in a society where exploitation is massive.

As a result, the situation described above leads to the impoverishment of the Kenyan people. Impoverishment refers to the process of making individuals extremely poor or weak, and this is precisely what happened to the Kenyan population, who were

left destitute due to the corrupt and greedy political leadership. This harsh reality serves as a central theme for post-independence writers like Ngũgĩ, who aim to give a voice to the oppressed masses. In *Matigari*, a novel set in post-colonial Kenya, this theme is powerfully depicted. An era characterised by an extreme poverty of the population. The lifestyle of Muruiki and other homeless children is the proof of that poverty as stated in the novel.

(...) The children raced the tractor to the garbage yard (...) Hawks hovered dangerously in the sky. A pack of stray dogs walked about, sniffing here and there at the rubbish. Two men stood at the only entrance to the yard, arranging the children into a queue. I wonder what they are queuing for (...) Some of the children had stuffed their mouths with rotten tomatoes, while others were busy cleaning bones with their teeth, hoping to find a scrap of meat still clinging to them. (Ngũgĩ, 1987, p. 11-12).

This passage from the novel *Matigari* proves that the misrule of the leaders leads to children suffering from malnutrition. Owing to the lack of sustainable source of income at a sufficient level, children and their parents find it very difficult to have access to nutritious food : «Those children have to fight for patches of cloth, odd bits of leather shoes (...) rotten tomatoes» (Ngũgĩ, 1987, p. 11). All these show the sad realities of Kenyan society depicted by Ngũgĩ. The children and their parents live in squalor and the leader are offering themselves with the lion share and don't care about the rest living in very bad conditions.

3. MATIGARI'S STRUGGLE AS A METAPHOR FOR COLLECTIVE FRUSTRATION

In *Matigari*, the metaphor of collective frustration is deeply embedded in the protagonist's journey, and the actantial model offers a useful lens through which to explore this. By applying the actantial model, we can break down the central components of Matigari's struggle, showing how his personal quest mirrors the widespread sense of disillusionment that characterizes the larger society. This analytical approach will allow us to examine how Matigari's fight for justice is not only an individual endeavor but also a reflection of the collective yearning for change and the disappointment that follows, capturing the broader societal experience of frustration and betrayal.

The corpus reveals that the protagonist's struggle can be seen as a metaphor for collective frustration within a society grappling with the consequences of post-colonial dystopia. According to the actantial model, Matigari himself is the *subject*, the figure

representing the people who yearn for justice, equality, and a return to the ideals of independence. His goal, or function, is to restore the moral integrity of society and reclaim the lost values of freedom and dignity. Matigari's journey to find the "real" leaders of the new nation, and to confront the corrupt powers that have replaced the old colonial oppressors, symbolizes the collective frustration of a populace betrayed by its own leaders. His fight thus represents the hopes of a disillusioned people who see their dreams of a better future slipping away, yet still cling to the possibility of redemption and change. This can be clearly seen with the following passage of the author talking about the eponymous character Matigari :

He looked for truth and justice in the grass and in the bushes. He searched among the thorns, in the shrubs, the ditches and the molehills, and in birds nests. He searched for them in the whole nature. He was like one deranged. And all the while his heart beat : A farmer does not stop sowing just because one crop has failed. The seeker of justice does not stop searching until he finds it. Truth never dies. Justice is mightier than strength. (Ngũgĩ, 1987, p. 86)

The protagonist's journey is propelled not just by a need for personal justice, but by a deep conviction in the potential for a just and equitable society in the future. Matigari's guiding force is his idealized vision of a world where truth and morality overcome the forces of corruption and oppression. His pursuit of this "perfect" society is grounded in a strong moral code, one that has been deeply shaken by the injustices he faces. The society he envisions is not abstract or unrealistic, but it is a set of ethical principles that drive his actions, pushing him to confront the prevailing systems and restore values such as integrity, justice, and equality. This ideal becomes both a source of empowerment and frustration for Matigari, as it often places him in direct conflict with a world that seems indifferent or resistant to such ideals.

In this passage, Matigari's thorough search for truth and justice reflects his deep sense of disillusionment with the condition of post-colonial Kenya. His journey through different natural settings highlights the depth of his yearning and the vastness of his hope. However, despite his relentless pursuit, he begins to realize that the values he fought for truth and justice remain out of reach, swallowed up by a society tainted by greed and betrayal. His continuous journey through thorns and bushes suggests a growing sense of hopelessness, as though no matter where he looks, the justice he desires is nowhere to be found.

Matigari's efforts are persistently obstructed by some opponents according to the term of Greimas whose own personal interests lead them to oppose his cause. These

characters are often part of the new elite that rose to power after independence, benefiting from the same corrupt system that Matigari seeks to overthrow. Rather than supporting his pursuit of justice, they actively hinder his progress to safeguard their own privileges, which rely on maintaining the existing order. Their actions reveal a harsh truth: even in a post-colonial society, some are willing to sacrifice the collective aspirations of freedom and equality in favor of personal gain. By prioritizing wealth and power, these individuals not only thwart Matigari's mission but also exacerbate the widespread sense of disillusionment and frustration among the people as seen in the novel through these words: «This is the Voice of Truth ... His excellency...’Radios bleeping in the wilderness. The Voice of Truth had become the herdsman’s flute that lulled the herds to sleep. He ran away, but not bound by anyone. The announcer’s voice seemed to chase him across the plains» (Ngugi, 1987, p. 86).

The main opposition to Matigari's mission is the deeply rooted system of corruption and exploitation, personified by the leaders who refuse to be held accountable. These figures, though not as blatantly oppressive as the colonial powers, continue to perpetuate forms of exploitation that lead to a constant sense of disappointment among the people. Matigari's inability to achieve justice for everyone, culminating in his tragic demise, symbolizes the profound sense of disillusionment that runs throughout the story. Despite his courageous fight, the forces of power remain too firmly established, and the cycle of frustration persists, implying that, for the masses, real societal change may be an unattainable dream. This reinforces the metaphor of a never-ending, collective struggle against a system that breeds disillusionment and despair.

Conclusion

At the twilight of this paper, one may assert that *Matigari* serves as a powerful exploration of the gap between the utopian hope for a just society following independence and the harsh disappointment that arises when new leaders replicate the oppressive systems of the colonial past. By using the concepts of paratext and the actantial model, we have highlighted how the narrative constructs a vision of change through the protagonist's quest and the surrounding discourse of liberation, yet ultimately exposes the betrayal of revolutionary ideals by those in power. The elements of paratext such as the title, dedication and the cover page suggest the hope for a change in the future, while the actantial model helps to frame Matigari as the central actant

whose pursuit of justice is thwarted by the corrupt actants (leaders, institutions, and the disillusioned masses) that embody the failures of the post-colonial state.

Ultimately, *Matigari* reflects the bitter reality that the hopes for a transformative society are often crushed by those who seize power, turning the promise of liberation into a cycle of exploitation and unfulfilled aspirations. Yet, *Matigari*'s persistence embodies the undying hope for change, suggesting that the struggle for justice is not just a historical moment but an ongoing process, even in the face of deep disappointment.

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