CHAPTER II

MYTHS CRAFTED AND MYTHS CREATED

"Fear not those who kill the flesh, but fear those who kill the spirit. They cannot kill my spirit even if they kill me as they have killed the others. They will not kill the determination of this country to remain free": Waruru Kanja’a speech in Parliament on 13th November 1980. This quotation which Ngugi wa Thiong’o places at the opening of his prison diary *Detained* (1981), captures the spirit of his novel *Matigari* discussed in this chapter. The struggle for freedom that took root in Africa in the 1940s continues even today in the nations that have repressive totalitarian regimes. The first part of the chapter gives the background of the struggle and then proceeds to show how Ngugi wa Thiong’o uses Christian myth to debunk imperialism and neo-colonialism.

The leaders of the Fifth Pan African Congress met in Manchester, England, in October 1945 and issued a declaration: "We affirm the rights of all colonial peoples to control their own destiny . . . The long long night is over . . . COLONIAL AND SUBJECT PEOPLES OF THE WORLD UNITE!"
No one took them seriously, yet their call was prophetic for within two decades, the major colonial powers, Britain and France, were forced to leave. The richest and best educated colony, the Gold Coast, led by Nkrumah gained independence in 1957 to become Ghana. In 1945 most people had not even heard of Nkrumah but now he inspired the creation of other African nations. In 1960, seventeen new nations emerged in Africa and in the next five years, eleven more followed. From what was British East Africa, were created three new nations, Uganda (1962), Kenya (1963), and Tanzania (1964). The African leaders who emerged in this process were Milton Obote, Jomo Kenyatta and Julius Nyerere. The fiction of Ngugi wa Thiong'o deals with the upheavals in Kenya during the colonial and post-colonial time under Kenyatta.

The sequence of events in Ghana shows a pattern common to the happenings in other African states -- discontent that led to the riots, strikes and violence, the imprisonment of black political leaders, constitutional amendments, a struggle for control that finally led to independence. The economic situation was more complex. The two World Wars had depleted the strength of the colonial powers and they could not find resources to maintain their hold over the colonies. The colonies had seen a boom in trade as they had been the source of raw materials. The European dominated businesses like mining and intensive agriculture brought in wealth for the settlers but this led to social discontent because prosperity did not percolate to the native working class.
Besides the forces unleashed by such social discontent, there were other factors that contributed to the nationalist impulse. The new generation Africans educated in mission schools and later in Europe and England were now able to use the very principles of equality and self-determination, freedom and democracy, to lead their people to freedom from colonial rule. Secondly, during the war more than 200,000 East African troops had served the Allies on various fronts and when the war was over and they were demobilized, the veterans returned with a new confidence in their abilities. At about the same time, African American leaders were calling for Negro pride and unity of action and such ideas took root in Africa as well.

Of overriding importance in most anti-colonial struggles is the poverty and degradation that result from dispossession. The colonial government seized much of the ancestral terrain and confined native populations to reserves that were too small and often unproductive. In Kenya he once independent Kikuyu farmers were reduced to wage labourers on white farms or they became illegal squatters. Some had fled to the urban entres and lived in squalor, supporting themselves with odd jobs, often educated to stealing and prostitution. This forms the background to Ngugi’s novels.

In his book Homecoming Ngugi gives a vivid account of his own experience of such happenings. When he was about eleven, he was witness to the forcible eviction of some people from their land and they were sent to occupy that part of the country where practically nothing would grow and which the Africans called the land of black rocks. The women’s sad faces and
their plaintive song urging the children to rid the land of the white people remained etched in his memory. “They were in a convoy of lorries, caged, but they had one voice. They sang of a common loss and hope and I felt their voice rock the earth where I stood literally unable to move” (Ngugi 1972:48). Matigari’s chief concern in the novel is for the children of the land, their right to the ownership of land. This is the struggle between Settler Williams and Matigari, described as a continuing struggle of mythical proportions.

These inequities were the basis of the guerrilla movement in Kenya that came to be called the Mau Mau. It was predominantly a Kikuyu movement. The tribal leaders administered the oath of war. Standing naked and holding a ball of soil against his stomach, each warrior repeated:

“I speak true and swear before God and all present here
And by this Batuni Oath of Movement
Which is called the Oath of Killing
That is called upon to fight for our land
To shed my blood for it
I shall obey and never surrender.” (Allan 1986:90)

So began a campaign of terrorism and counter violence to suppress it. Not all Africans supported the Mau Mau. There were many pro-government chiefs and even among the Kikuyu, some were neutral. The African leader who won respect and who had a lot of influence was Jomo Kenyatta and he was persuaded by the colonial authorities to issue a statement condemning the Mau Mau; but violence continued. When in 1952, a prominent pro-government Kikuyu chief was gunned down near Nairobi, Kenyatta and
authorities to stop or at least curtail the loss of land to the White settlers and even went to London to appeal to the Colonial Office directly. He only met with indifference and disdain. Kenyatta lived in voluntary exile for many years, becoming a student of London University, and returned to Kenya years later. With the outbreak of the Mau Mau violence, Kenyatta, the man of peace, was suddenly seen as terrorist leader, and he suffered detention and a jail term. Kenyatta, as a leader who suffered for his people, became a hero and saviour in the public imagination.

Ngugi worked in the University of Nairobi in the English Department. As he was an outspoken critic of the neo-colonialist developments in his country, and a Marxist in his outlook, he came to be viewed as a threat to the established regime, and in December 1977, he was detained without trial, ostensibly for reasons of public security. He was placed in Kamiti Maximum security Prison and his experiences as a political prisoner are recounted in a prison diary, published as Detained (1981). Ironically, it is the death of Kenyatta that brought freedom to Ngugi and others like him.

Matigari, who is the representative and archetypal freedom fighter, comes back to his homeland after years of exile, hoping to find his kinsmen free and prosperous and is appalled to find the evils of colonialism stalking the land. He roams the countryside asking one simple question: “Where is truth and justice?” Matigari, who comes as a man of ace, is seen as a threat to the powers that be and he suffers political detention. It is the myth-making strategies in the narration that bestow upon Matigari, the role of messianic hero and saviour of the people. It is very
important to keep the mythic consciousness alive in order to keep the political struggle alive, and Ngugi's fiction works toward this end.

That the political aspirations are most often worded by a mythic consciousness is seen in Ngugi's response to Kenyatta's death, which occurred when he was in prison. "My reception of his death was one of sadness: here was a black Moses who had been called by history to lead his people to the promised land of no exploitation, no oppression, but who failed to rise to the occasion... For me, his death, even though he had wrongly jailed me, his death was not an occasion for rejoicing but one that called for serious revaluation of our history; to see the balance of losses and gains, and work out the options open to us for the future of our children and country" (Ngugi 1981:162-163). This is what he does in the novel *Matigari*. Speaking of neo-colonialism, Ngugi spontaneously uses the imperialist's myth and religion to attack him. "Colonial Lazarus raised from the dead: this putrid spectre of our recent history haunted us daily in Kamiti Prison. It hovered over us, its shadow looming larger and larger... Who raised colonial Lazarus from the dead to once again foul the fresh air of Kenya's dawn?" (1981:63).

Ngugi believes that the boundaries of a writer's imagination are set by the social, political and economic forces of that particular society. Creative literature in Africa has grown against the gory background of imperialism and what distresses Ngugi is that the patterns of exploitation persist after independence. Ngugi says, "There has been no basic land reform; the settler owning 600 acres of land is replaced by a single African owning the 600 acres
There has been no socialization of the middle commercial sector; the Asian dukawallah goes away, to be replaced by a single dukawallah" (Roscoe 1977:173).

This is the political and economic background for the novel *Matigari*. Adrian Roscoe says that this abiding concern with the soil and man's relationship to it is an important theme in Ngugi's novels, “not as some Lawrentian dream of giving industrial man an anchor for his sanity, but as the central factor in an equation guaranteeing the economic, social, psychological, and spiritual survival of a people.” (1977:171).

*Matigari* has a mythological framework and like any mythological story, it is timeless. This is made evident in the address to the reader/listener by the author himself at the beginning of the novel. Written in the form of an incantatory exhortation, the note to the reader/listener invites one to participate in the myth-making exercise. The story is imaginary, the country and characters are imaginary. So, Ngugi says, let the story take place in the country of your choice. There is no fixed time, it may be long ago or yesterday. Let the action take place in the time of your choice. It has no fixed setting, this village or that region. Let the action take place in the space of your choice. Thus the reader/listener is not only using his imagination to visualize but is also constantly seeing the relevance of what he is creating, connecting it with his own world experience. Ngugi also creates the ambience of a folk gathering settling down to listen to a mythical tale.

"So say yes, and I'll tell you a story!

Once upon a time, in a country with no name . . .
of the same name. In February 1987, the police raided all the book
shops and seized every copy of the novel." (Matigari viii)

Matigari is relevant to not just Kenya but any place in the world where there
is need for security and belonging, where there is a yearning for a just and
strong leader who will set things right in the country.

It is just such a vacuum that necessitates myth-making. There is a
need for the messianic hero who will succeed in his search for a solution to
the problems besetting the country. Ngugi provides this type of hero in the
novel. Simon Gikandi in his article ‘The Epistemology of Translation: Ngugi,
Matigari, and the Politics of Language’ talks about his childhood experiences
of the Mau Mau movement. Fierce battles were fought in the region where he
lived, but the people could only talk about it “in whispers and ciphered
euphemisms.” It remained the unnamable unspoken experience till
independence was achieved. The etymology of the word “Matigari” is
interesting. It means the leftovers of food or drink. By 1963, this became the
signifier for the unmentionable Mau Mau and gained currency as a word that
referred to the revolutionaries that survived in the forest after Kenyatta
became prime minister. The Kenyatta government was in a paradoxical
situation, for many who were the staunchest opponents of the Mau Mau were
now a part of the power structure. Therefore the government proclaimed that
all Kenyans were part of the independence struggle, and while celebrating
the heroism of the warriors, the recalcitrant generals, now called ‘Matigari’
were hunted down. The political discontent festered under the injustices of
neo-colonialism. It was now fed by rumour, gossip and legend. One of the
Matigari, General Stanley Mathenge had, according to popular belief, fled to Ethiopia and had become a powerful confidant of Emperor Haile Sellassie and was waiting for an opportune moment to intervene in Kenya. Songs and popular discourse had it that the Matigari would one day return to set things right, and the myth of the messianic hero took root in the popular imagination (161-162). The people in Ngugi's novel are all talking about such a Matigari, and the courage of the one who has returned in the face of oppression gets exaggerated to feed the mythic imagination of the people.

There are other elements of myth in the novel like resurrection, the Second Coming of Christ, prophecy, mythic transformation, besides numerous allusions and metaphors. While the people in the novel indulge in the myth-making, Ngugi curiously enough, breaks it for the reader by making effective use of irony and realism. The reader thus participates in the myth-making and at the same time is able to evaluate it as a social process in a distinctively objective manner.

One of the means by which Ngugi achieves this is in his use of descriptive details and setting. It can be both specific and nonspecific. These alterations come so quickly and so subtly that the total impression is often ambiguous. Actions and conversations are both ritualistic and realistic and the reader/listener is constantly engaged in linking the world of reality and the world of myth. Such a to-and fro movement is what is striking in the very first section of the novel. "He held an AK 47 in his right hand. His left hand was raised to shield his face while he looked across the river, as he had often
done over many years across many hills and valleys, in the four corners of the globe.” (3)

While the AK 47, the river and the gestures may be specific enough, the many hills and valleys in the four corners of the globe alerts us to the fact that no human being could have walked the earth. By such simple descriptive devices, Ngugi lets us see two levels of meaning. The action becomes ritualistic when he suddenly stops in front of the mugumo tree or fig tree. The tree itself is remarkable for its size and shape, having four roots, one central root from the middle and the others sticking out at the sides, making the reader associate it with the cross. Then commences the burying of the weapons, and the slow deliberate movements are described in meticulous detail, which makes it a ritual. Curiously, he carries an AK 47, a sword and a pistol with a holster with a cartridge belt decorated with red, blue and green beads. (One remembers the meaning of Kenyatta’s name -- a decorated belt.) Taking out his sword he digs near the central root, lines the hole with leaves and after the ritual cleansing of the sword, he lays the weapons inside, fills up the hole and scatters dried leaves over it. He goes down to the river to wash his face and hands. The chilly waters remind him “of other waters in the past which had been just as cold” -- the cold bath before the mararanja ceremony or ritual circumcision and also the initiation ceremony before an armed struggle. The ritual just completed, however, is his initiation into peace, a struggle which is more difficult than armed struggle. Tearing off a piece of bark from a tree, he girds himself with it murmuring, “I
have now girded myself with the belt of peace. I shall go back to my house and rebuild my home”(5).

The quest for his home, his family has begun. What makes this a modern mythic quest is that it is a search for a new political and economic ideology, and the dragons he has to encounter are injustice and fear. Narrative and linguistic devices also add that mythical quality to the narrative.

The quest theme at once suggests the Grail legend and whether Ngugi intended it or not, the reader discerns similarities and differences in the mythic patterns. At the very outset, Ngugi has invited the reader’s participation. The quest is like the Grail adventure in that it fights evil and decay and seeks to establish the ideal kingdom (homeland) where justice and plenty prevail. The existing condition in Kenya is like the wasteland where people scavenge for food and are deprived of their rights. In the Grail legend, Sir Parzival attains purification after overcoming trials and temptations, and is therefore able to cure the Grail King and restore the fertility of the land. The metaphor of disease and its cure is suggested by the story of Ndiro at the very beginning of the novel. As Matigari resolves to help the people, he feels tempted to see his own family and house and says, “So many traps, oh so many temptations, in the way of the traveller on this earth!”(6). Sir Parzival’s quest is an individual quest which however bestows a blessing and transforms the wasteland. In Ngugi’s novel however, the hero has to make the people participate in the quest. First of all, they must become aware of their plight and the causes of the prevailing injustice. They must build up
line." The hunt for Matigari lasts the whole night. The pack of dogs and mounted policemen close in on them from all sides. Their only hope is to cross the river and reach the mugumo tree. Matigari declares, "Once I wear my belt none of them will be able to cross the river, even if they come in their thousands." Once again the donning of weapons is described in ritualistic detail and just as he finishes it, a riderless horse passes by, gazes at him and disappears into the forest (175). The whole episode suggests that Matigari is specially protected and the waters of the river will act as an effective barrier even as the waters of the sea separated Moses from his pursuers.

The initiation ceremonies are suggested once more but this time the cold waters of the river are coloured with the blood of Matigari and Guthera. The blood mingles with the waters and then with the soil. This time, it is not an initiation into adulthood, but the initiation of the people into freedom and responsibility and the sacrifices that go with it. The event is made apocalyptic, because suddenly the rain pours, thunder rents the air, lightning flashes, and the deluge separates the hunters from the hunted.

What makes the novel itself read like a myth is the character of Matigari. He is always seen in a worn out leopard skin coat, corduroy trousers and a wide-brimmed hat that is decorated with a band of beads. He is like any man. His name is not revealed until page twenty three when he has experienced rejection and non-recognition from his own children. He then tells one of them his name 'Matigari ma Njiruungi' which means the patriots who survived the bullets in the liberation war and their political offspring. When he begins to tell the story of his struggle with Settler
Williams and John Boy, we become aware that he is not any man but Everyman. Settler Williams becomes the archetypal exploiter and his self-seeking assistant or servant, who makes this exploitation possible by betraying his own people is John Boy. Matigari says that he built the house but Settler Williams lived in it, he tilled the land but Williams took the harvest, he worked the machines but the white man took the profits. In a way Matigari becomes the representative worker, of any country, who is under paid and overworked.

The struggle between Matigari and Settler Williams is narrated like a mythical tale, becoming a struggle between good and evil. Over the mountains and down through the groves, across rivers and ditches, on the plains and every where, the two fight, but somehow they are unable to destroy one another. "Neither of us was prepared to surrender. Sometimes I would hit him and think that I had provided him with a ticket to hell. But just as I was about to come out singing songs of victory, news would reach that he had been spotted elsewhere, searching to destroy me..." (20). This struggle between oppressor and oppressed seems to go on in all ages in all countries in form or another. This becomes especially the tale of Africa and Africans, a people who have suffered dispossession and slavery for so many centuries.

Matigari is moved by his vision and in this he is more than Everyman. His vision of his home, where he and his children can enter together, light the fire together and work together to create a paradise on earth is powerful enough to bring to the surface the sub-conscious yearnings and dreams of the
people. This story of his struggle with Settler Williams and his vision of his homeland is repeated several times in the novel and each time the listener is captivated and transported, moved and enthused. It becomes a living myth, a force that moves people to action and sacrifice. This is the way Te Kooti, the prophet, moved the Maori people, as Ihimaera shows in *The Mutriarch*. It is the way in which, as said earlier, Hitler fired the imagination of his people. It is the myth of the promised land that helped to found Israel. It is fiction that helps us to see patterns in both myth and history.

The character of the mythic hero exhibits certain qualities as Joseph Campbell has shown. The mythic hero is endowed with extraordinary courage and single-mindedness in the pursuit of his goal and the completion of his quest. The mythic hero is one who brings about transformation in himself and others or in society at large. Transformation can be brought about only if the hero has qualities of fearlessness, steadfast virtue and courage in action. He must be a visionary and have the power to make others share his vision. He goes through many trials and tribulations, and his faith in himself or in his god is tested and he emerges victorious. These are the lines on which the character of Matigari is drawn. In his confrontation with the police in the Gutheria incident, his confrontation with Settler Williams and John Boy, in his challenge to the Minister at the meeting, he shows such extraordinary fearlessness that those in power are nonplused. At a time when people are completely ruled by fear, his courage has an electrifying effect. Not once does he deviate from his quest for truth and justice. People have forgotten to ask the simplest questions or they are simply too frightened
to seek an answer. "Where can I find truth and justice?" is a question that Matigari asks all kinds of people—men, women and children, people in the market place, workers on the plantation, people at the Court or at meetings and invariably the response is incomprehension and fear. His courage in questioning loosens the grip of fear and slowly but surely people are moved to act against oppression. The first instance of transformation is seen in Ngaruro wa Kiriro who is then able to transmit the message of victory and fearlessness to the other workers (24). The transformation is worked on Guthera and the children too. The turning point is seen in the meeting presided over by the Minister Ole. Not only does Kiriro speak out, but each of those prisoners who had earlier retracted now makes a loud proclamation against the oppressor. The Minister's ban is not heeded and people burst into song about Matigari.

The mythic hero is often assisted by supernatural forces or he possesses weapons or articles that bestow special powers or protection on the owner. Matigari seems to lead a charmed existence. In his first encounter with the children in the graveyard of the cars, he feels that he has found his own children and is full of love and sympathy for them. He is greatly appalled and saddened by their miserable existence and this only strengthens his resolve to find his 'home' to which he can take them. The children, so unused to any show of love or concern from an adult, look upon him as a trespasser and a threat, and resort to the only method of self-defence they know. They jeer and throw stones at him. "His head and shoulders drooped in sadness. His face creased with age. But he seemed to be
protected by a powerful charm, because not a stone touched him." His predicament becomes an entertaining spectacle for those who pass by, for they stop their cars to laugh at him. Many doubts assail Matigari. "What curse has befallen us that we should now be fighting one another? That children and their parents should be fighting while our enemies watch with glee?" (18). The protective charm is lost along with the confidence in himself and faith in his people. The stones find their target and he starts bleeding. The little boy Muriuki and the worker Ngaruroro wa Kiriro are the only ones who show some concern. His confidence and faith return and he springs up with such youthful vigour that the other two wordlessly wonder at the transformation. This occurs several times in the novel. Ngugi wants to tell his people that as long as the spirit of truth and justice, courage and perseverance is alive, the people will be victorious. The spirit remains though many may be martyred in the cause.

Such a bald statement, however true, has no impact. We need the excitement of a conflict, the suspense of who will win, in order to internalize that lesson. The depiction of Matigari as a supernatural hero sustains this interest and drives home the point. But if the character is so superhuman, so exaggerated that no human being can emulate him, then the novel becomes an entertaining fantasy. Ngugi moves between realism and myth with subtle artistry.

The novel is firmly anchored in the political reality of his country, seen through the individual lives of the people. The first instance of reality that appalls Matigari is the children's village in the graveyard of the cars. This
reality has been totally ignored by the government, the ministers and the powers that be. To those who ride past in their cars it is part of the landscape to be ignored. The children are rag-pickers and live off the garbage brought by the tractors and vans. They have to queue in front of the yard gate and pay an entry fee to the gateman to enter. Once inside, they compete with dogs and vultures to find scraps of food and other discarded items that may be of some use. If a little boy finds something, then a big boy bullies him and takes it away. Each child sleeps in a car that has been stripped of anything of value. It is in this children’s village that Matigari finds shelter when he is pursued by the police.

Ngugi’s depiction of the Government of His Excellency Ole Excellence is blended with a fine sense of ironic-satiric humour. His Excellency is the Minister of Truth and Justice and he proudly proclaims himself as the head of a Christian democracy (121). The narrative amply demonstrates that the reality is far from the “truth” that the Government tries to project. It is this gap between the sign and signification that Ngugi exploits with comic effect. That it is not a democracy is clear in that His Excellency sees no need for an opposition party and bans it. (Kenyatta did this and his successor followed suit.) The workers are not given a chance to represent their views or demands and any strike is ruthlessly put down as if it were a mutiny. The Minister’s long speech at the meeting in Section Two is again a serious-comic depiction of double standards:

“The rule of law is the true measure of civilization. I should know. I was brought up in the law and believe it. I abide by the law and the law
abides in me. I have been taught the law and I believe in it. I am the guardian of the law today. I make the law and I ensure that it is kept."

(102)

While appearing to uphold the law, civilization and democracy, he does not realize and neither do many in the audience, that he is in fact defining himself as a dictator. Though Abdulrazak Gurnah calls this meeting "slapstick comedy" it seems to correspond with what Hitler said and did in Germany. Ivan Strenski tells us why Cassirer led his family into exile shortly after Hitler assumed power. He quotes from the biography written by Cassirer's wife, Toni Cassirer:

"The first [official Nazi] publications were not all that alarming. Nothing was mentioned about persecution or laws restricting Jews. But then one day, one of Hitler's edicts read, 'Whatever serves the Fuhrer is law.' Ernst said to me, 'If tomorrow every jurist in Germany to a man does not rise and protest these paragraphs, then surely Germany is lost.' Not a single voice spoke out" (Strenski 1987:16).

The "act" that the Minister and John Boy put up on stage has the purpose of promoting the myth that they have created progress, development and the rule of law. Those who toe the line and propagate this myth, like the Professors of Parrotology at the History Conference, receive promotions and rewards. For Ngugi, the proposition that the loyalists are those who supported the colonial powers in the name of protecting the law, is a distortion of history and a distortion of the aspirations of the people. At the meeting, the Minister wants to show the foreign dignitaries how "instant
justice" works. He is assisted by his band of judges and the members of the Hooded Truth and Justice, the latter being the informers who are everywhere. The trial that follows is a parody of the law. This form of "instant justice" ensures that anyone who has contrary views and has the courage to voice it is perceived as a security threat and put in jail. Ngugi himself suffered this kind of political detention during the Kenyatta regime.

At the very outset, the Minister of Truth and Justice receives a 'donation' from Settler Williams and John Boy. They declare that they have taken the revolutionary step of giving "personal shares" to the ruling party. The ruling party is the party of the people and hence the people own the shares! The only people who prosper are those who can 'contribute' to the government. What Ngugi wants to show is that corruption, nepotism, sycophancy and police brutality pass by the name 'Christian democracy'. This myth is assiduously propagated by the radio news, The Voice of Truth and Justice, and to debunk this myth in public is dangerous. It is precisely this that Matigari wants to achieve, and the qualities of the mythic hero are necessary to succeed. So one can call Matigari a realist and activist, yet he is a mythic hero in the imagination of his people because he sets out to "slay the dragons" of the government.

As Matigari, Guthera and Muriuki ride through the city in the Minister's Mercedes car (after the hilarious disrobing of the Minister's wife who was making love to the chauffeur), Guthera says, "It is true that there are two worlds in this country." To this, Matigari replies, "This world is upside down. The robber calls the robbed robber. The murderer calls the
murdered murderer, and the wicked calls the righteous evil" (150). Matigari's vision for his people is a Marxist paradise where there are no rich and poor; it is also a harking back to tribal community existence where class differences did not exist. Ngaruro wa Kiriro gives a more balanced interpretation of the situation. (Matigari who at times sounds like a politically outdated Rip Van Winkle is educated by Kiriro in prison.) There are two camps in the country. The first comprises the imperialists, the ruling party, police, military and the gun men who run the government. The history of the land according to them is composed of the glorious deeds of the ministers. This is the official version put out by the government agencies. The second camp comprises the working people and the landless labourers, who struggle to keep their values, and their African culture. This real history of the people and the land is suppressed and if ever a voice is raised, it is choked in detention camps. At the meeting Kiriro makes bold to say, "... We are not asking for other people's property. We are only asking for adequate remuneration for our labour. The labour of our hands is all we own. It is our only property. We sell this labour in the labour market... If the buyer refuses to pay the price asked for by the seller, has the latter not got the right to refuse to part with his wares until he gets a suitable price for them?" (109). Kiriro is claiming the right to strike and the right to demand a higher wage, a right that exists in every democracy. His speech is greeted with ululation and applause from the crowd, whereas the Minister considers it insolent and a deliberate flouting of his Presidential decree. That dictatorship is the fine art of perpetrating a myth, with the help of the police of course, is seen in the outcome of the meeting. The judges pronounce that Kiriro and Matigari are
insane and they are sent to the lunatic asylum. The crowd however, sings the song of victory and finally breaks into the song about Matigari which has been banned by the Minister.

Police brutality and harassment of women is a common enough phenomenon and no country can claim to be free of this evil. In a dictatorship, Ngugi shows, it passes for the law of the land. The story of Guthera is moving, much like the story Draupadi by the Indian author Mahasweta Devi and the unwritten stories of hundreds of women all over the world. One is reminded of Ngugi’s statement at the beginning, “reader/listener may the story take place in the country of your choice.”

The myth-making process starts with the Guthera episode. It draws heavily on the patterns in Christian mythology like the Second Coming and the resurrection. It is dealt with in such a way a way that it is not an endorsement of the belief and the novel shows it to be a pattern of expectation and hope. Guthera’s father was a church elder, and her mother had died at childbirth. Guthera becomes a born-again Christian. Then suddenly the war of resistance breaks out. One day her father is arrested as he is found carrying bullets for the patriots in the jungles. The stunned girl is told by the superintendent of police that her father’s life is in her hands. If she gives up her purity, she could have her parent back. The troubled girl seeks guidance from the priest, who prays to the heavenly father to help the girl tread the path of virtue. The father is hanged and the orphaned children do not know how to get food. Guthera is driven to walk the streets but she makes the eleventh commandment for herself, never to sleep with a
policeman. The handsome woman however, catches the attention of two policemen and the woman’s refusal only whets their appetite. Once they spot her in a street and they threaten to let loose the police dogs on her and watch her plight with sadistic pleasure. The crowd gathers to watch the spectacle, but none dares to interfere. Matigari, greatly pained and angered by this brutality, strides out to confront these monsters in the form of the policemen. Not only does he challenge the policemen but he also upbraids the onlookers for showing such abject fear that it amounts to concurrence. “Why do you hide behind a cloak of silence and let yourselves be ruled by fear? Remember the saying that too much fear breeds misery in the land” (30-31).

Such confident and fearless speech is so unusual that the crowd parts to give him way. What is significant is that Matigari first addresses the people and not the policemen. He recognizes the truth that any change of attitude, any fight against misrule must come from the people. The policemen challenge him and ask what right he has to interfere in ‘the process of law.’ When Matigari stands his ground and demands to know which law permits them to harass a defenceless woman, they threaten to let loose the dogs on him. He simply dares them to do so. Suddenly, the policemen are afraid of the consequences and slink away, shouting at Guthera. Matigari walks up to the cowering woman and addresses her, “Mother . . . stand up.” This attitude to woman, so much a part of pre-colonial days, seems an anachronism now. The crowd disperses, people heading in different directions, discussing the event, somehow energized, but asking one question, “Who is Matigari?” The
incident is also in keeping with the mythical pattern, for the hero always respects women, and rescues her from previous danger.

As the story of this confrontation spreads, the myth-making process takes over. It assumes the form of a supernatural tale. Matigari’s head reaches the sky and he holds a flaming sword in his hand. The policemen quake with fear at the sight of him. He has come to seek truth and justice in the land. The incident seems to trigger the mythical imagination of the people and their hope of a saviour makes them create the supernatural figure of Matigari.

This myth-making process is fueled by the next episode. Matigari, true to his mission, seeks out Settler Williams and John Boy so that he can claim his ancestral home. Ngugi’s narrative technique blends realism and myth with artistry. The conversation, printed in italics, shows that the persons that Matigari addresses are, in fact, the sons of Settler Williams and John Boy. They wonder how “this scarecrow” seems to know all. The outcome of this confrontation is that he is whipped and thrown into prison. The prison setting provides Ngugi an excellent opportunity to provide insights into the miseries of the common man. The technique is full of subtle variations. The tone varies from ironic and satiric to solemn and serious, even religious at times. He uses suggestion, parallelism, allusion, inversion and parody. The language varies from biblical to banal but the nuances Ngugi achieves in style, make the novel a pleasure to read.

Matigari is flung into a small dark cell which reeks of the odour of the others packed into it. Among them is a drunkard and the others have to
crowd in a corner as he happily eases himself in the room. A helpless despair often breeds a harsh kind of humour and in his drunken bemused state, the man utters some truths. "I swear I was just helping God to make it rain," he says, and explains that the drought had spread across the land. Then perhaps, God might follow his example and send down some drops too. The dialogue that follows is a parody of the wasteland theme, of sacrifice and rain-making. From the time of the Pharaoh to the coming of the white man, they have known nothing but exploitation and the present leaders are no better. Who will come to dispel the curse? A seeker of truth and justice? A second coming? In this way Ngugi succeeds in merging Matigari's quest with the Christ myth. However all this is not to experience a spiritual euphoria, or propagate belief in a heaven after this life, but to establish the Kingdom of God, here in this life, in concrete political and economic terms. This is the end to which the myth-making process in the novel is used.

Matigari is made into a Christ-like figure when Ngugi describes Matigari sharing supper with the prisoners. A definite parallel to Christ's last supper is created. After they share their experiences, they suddenly realize that they are hungry. Matigari recalls that he has a packet of food and a bottle of beer. (He has not touched food since the Guthera incident and during the long walk through the plantation, Guthera and Muriuki wonder how he had the energy to move.) All the prisoners wonder how he has been let in with such things, for every prisoner is thoroughly searched and he is cleaned out of all his possessions before he is put into the cell. These details
make him seem somehow specially protected in the eyes of the reader/listener and help in the myth-making process.

How are they going to share food in the darkness? Surprisingly, solutions present themselves. The peasant remembers that he had bought a candle and the teacher has a match box. They light two candles and as the shadows dance around, all eyes turn to Matigari. He sings the old African song of sharing, striking a chord that had not resonated for a long time. He breaks the bread and hands it around, opens the beer bottle with his teeth, pours a little on the floor in libation and passes it around. When it is the turn of the drunkard, he leaps to his feet and starts speaking as if he were reading from the Bible:

“And when the time for the supper came, he sat at the table together with his disciples. He told them: I want you to share this last supper with me, to remind us that we shall not be able to eat together again unless our kingdom comes. And he took the bread and after breaking it he said: This is my body which I give to you. Do this unto one another until the Second Coming. He then took the cup and after blessing it he said: And this cup is a testament of the covenant we entered with one another with our blood. Do this to one another until our kingdom comes, through the will of the people” (57).

With that twist at the end Ngugi transforms a biblical statement into a political statement. By putting these words in the mouth of a drunkard, Ngugi is making a satirical comment both about the colonists use of Christianity, and the political situation in the country. The whole scene
works as a biblical parallel and is at the same time a distortion of it. This distortion points to the fact that the Christian values did not apply to the colonizer’s actions, whereas it was used to instill obedience and submission in the colonized. The covenant of blood reminds the prisoners and the readers of the Mau Mau oath of liberation. In that overcrowded cell however, the drunkard’s words have an electrifying effect. Every one turns to Matigari expecting something extraordinary to happen. They want to know who he is, and already the hope of the saviour come again takes root. The drunkard persists, “Tell us the word! Give us the good tidings.” Then, Matigari tells them the story of his struggle with Settler Williams, “like a father to his children.” When they realize that the person before them is Matigari himself, excitement mounts and the worker tells them his experience of the strike and how Ngaruro wa Kiriro had inspired them to persevere by telling them the story of Matigari and the policemen, and how he had been transformed into a giant. The drunkard then solemnly declares, “From today you will be known as the Seeker of Truth and Justice. Don’t take it too hard. The Son of God was baptized by John the Baptist. That is why I have taken the liberty of baptizing you” (62).

Ngugi uses incongruity and satiric humour and yet manages to link the myth of the Second Coming to the myth of Matigari. The popular imagination has by now created a mythical hero, a saviour and messianic figure that is not the reality, and yet this imagined hero has the power to energize the people, and help them to recover their hope for a better future. The drunkard’s act of baptizing Matigari has many implications. Comic irony
and parody give way to a reading of the truth in political terms. The power of Matigari comes from the support of the ordinary people who are willing to act. It is their dream of a just and prosperous society, stifled by the present system, that Matigari has resuscitated. The various stages of myth-making in politics are clearly demonstrated.

The excitement of beholding their saviour is tempered by the reality that it is not easy to fight the system. They cannot help doubting if he is really Matigari ma Njiruungi and they ask for confirmation. Can Matigari show some supernatural sign? Matigari's reply is couched in biblical language and metaphor and yet not once does he exploit it as religious sentiment, but uses it to make a political statement. He says that he does not need signs and miracles to prove his identity. His actions will be his trumpet, and after he girds himself with his gun, he will stand on top of the highest mountain and tell it to all his people: "Open your eyes and see what I have seen... Open your ears and hear what I have heard... Let the will of the people be done! Our Kingdom come as once decreed by the Iregi revolutionaries" (63). It is the political will of the people he wants to strengthen, not their faith. It is at such a moment that Te Kooti in The Matriarch sees the potential to establish the Ringatu Church. Te Kooti comes to be considered its prophet. Matigari too becomes one in the public imagination, and though he speaks like one, often in parables, he is ever the realist and activist. In fact the narrative technique subverts the Christian myth, even while exploiting it.
The ironical tension between faith and the use of biblical language for political ends continues in the episode in the prison. There is an upsurge of fear when one of the prisoners says, "Wherever you find twelve people gathered, one of them will always be an informer." This leads to an altercation between two inmates. Matigari, unperturbed, has faith that the Truth will triumph and in the manner of a prophecy, invites them all to a feast to celebrate the homecoming the day after. Not one of them believes that they will be released so soon, as the police are in collusion with Settler Williams and John Boy. "Only Gabriel the angel of God can get you out of here Amen," the drunkard says. It seems as if both Matigari and the drunkard are prophetic. Hardly has he uttered this than they hear the sound of footsteps and the jingling of keys. As they huddle in fear, the door opens, and a voice whispers, "Come out quietly. Don't make any noise and don't look back. When you get to the road, you Matigari should wait by the clinic. The rest of you must continue walking without looking back!" There is nobody at the reception desk. Is this a miracle? From that night Matigari's fame spreads like wild fire. "He became a legend. He became a dream. Still the question remained. Who was Matigari ma Njiruungi?" (66).

Ngugi makes us see how myth-making in the popular imagination is started at the intersection of reality and dream. This myth-making has become a real force, inspiring the people to action, giving them a new vision of life. The radio announcement makes it clear that the lock has not been tampered with and the bars are intact. The policeman still has the bunch of keys in his pocket. The aura of mystery and the suggestion of miracle
reinforces the myth-making that has already started. The policeman, according to some newspaper reports, fell on his knees and pleaded, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am a sinner before Thee! I beg you to tell me if it is thy hand which has set them free, as you did once long ago in the case of Paul in the Capernaum prison!" (80). Ngugi draws attention to the similarity between the way in which fear of God and fear of government works. People gather in groups to talk about Matigari. They say that after he had been arrested, he just said to the police, "Don't rejoice just because you have brown me in this hell. You will see me again after only three days" (79). The suggestion of Christ's resurrection and his Second Coming are so powerful that the people who had formerly been ruled by fear are now talking about hange and hope and the rulers themselves are now filled with fear of etribution from the Lord.

The media and the public imagination assist one another in the myth-making process. Rumour had it that there was thunder and lightning for one hour after the event. Those who had once considered the miracles of Moses and Christ as just biblical myths now begin to wonder if the prophecy of his Second Coming could be true. One of the prisoners awaiting trial says, "Why not? Let's count. Where is the oldest church in the world? In Ethiopia, Africa. When he was a baby, where did he flee to? Egypt, Africa. What happened before can happen again" (81). He continues in this vein to say that if the Lord were to appear before him, he would kneel before him. The Lord would eat him on his right side and then see the hypocrisy and injustice
perpetrated by the Boys and the Williamses and they would be thrown into everlasting fire.

Throughout Part II of the novel, we feel that Matigari is here, there and everywhere. The narrative style somehow makes us feel that he is omnipresent. He is seen in the market places, eating places, at the cross roads, in the farmlands, in the law courts and other places. His search for truth and justice even takes him to the wilderness and we are reminded of Christ's experience in the wilderness. Everywhere, people in groups are talking about Matigari. They yearn to see him and shake his hand and touch him. At that very moment Matigari presents himself and asks them, "Where can I find truth and justice?" The people who feel elevated by their own myth-making find the question odd and deflating and do not recognize that the man whom they most want to meet is right in front of them. They prefer the more engrossing tale of Jesus, Gabriel, Matigari and the opening of the prison doors. Paradoxically, at this juncture, faith is akin to fantasy. Again at a time when more people are inclined to faith, Ngugi subverts it, for it his intention to show that it is human action and will power that will change things, not some remote god.

The sociological impact however shows that there is a kind of religious and political awakening among the people. The people are in the grip of the myth they themselves have created and the Government sees danger in the power of that myth. The special announcement on the Voice of Truth and Justice gives this warning and it is printed in italics:
"Special announcement . . . Special announcement . . .

Government spokesman has announced that the people should not heed the rumours spreading in the country that the Angel Gabriel let some prisoners out of their cell and that one of the prisoners was Jesus Christ. There is no truth whatsoever in these rumours about Jesus and Gabriel returning. The Government will not hesitate to clamp down on any religion claiming that Christ has come back. The Government will not hesitate to withdraw licenses from matatus which allow such rumours to continue. Those are false Christs and false Gabriels. There is no way that Jesus could return without first going to pay a courtesy call on His Excellency Ole Excellence. Members of the public are urged to report anyone claiming to be Jesus or Gabriel to the nearest police station . . ." (84).

The irony is that the Voice of Truth and Justice is for once, making a correct claim (except for the courtesy call!) but the people are not willing to accept it as true. It becomes comic when later, at the Minister’s meeting, the priest, who is also a part of the establishment, is summoned to read from the Book of Mathew, chapter 24, verse 23: “Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there, believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets . . .” Both sides quote scripture for their purpose, each one considering the other the devil!

It is soon evident that what Ngugi is demonstrating is the tension between belief, religion and truth. What Ngugi shows is that the so-called faith in Christ in real life turns out to be a myth. People are governed by
fear, fear of the government or fear of the Lord. The second kind of fear is seen in the comic-serious description of Matigari’s meeting with the priest. Having heard the stories that Jesus has revealed himself to the children, to the workers and so on, the priest is in a state of great agitation. When Matigari stands at the doorway, the priest is on his knees, praying. He earnestly implores the Lord to guide him for the Lord has said that one must be ever ready, for if there are two, one will be saved and the other not. He prays that his eyes and ears may be opened so that he may recognize the Lord no matter how he is dressed. He suddenly realizes that the Lord may say to him, “Just as you did not for the least of those among you, so you did not unto me.”(93). When Matigari clears his throat, the priest is greatly rightened and breaks into a sweat. Is this the Lord come to test him? He anxiously asks the visitor if he is hungry, thirsty or if he needs shelter. Matigari says that he is greatly troubled for he cannot find truth and justice in the land and his mind is burdened with questions regarding virtue and vil. The priest asks if he has been to church. Matigari says that he belongs to no church. He then unburdens himself, narrating the story of Guthera, how she had lost her father and how she had broken the eleventh commandment she had set for herself in order to free Matigari and the prisoners. Tempting the policeman on duty to sleep with her she had procured the keys and given them to Muriuki to open the door. Was Guthera a sinner? Was it the injustice in the system? How was one to sort out the question of guilt and responsibility? A great burden slips off the shoulder of the priest, for now he knows that the tales about the angel Gabriel are false.
This unseemly relief felt by the priest, the man who interpreted the word of God, raises many questions about the nature of religion, myth and myth-making. We are reminded of Nietzsche's idea about Christianity being the outcome of the myth-making process at work among a slave people. In one novel, Ngugi uses stylistic and narrative devices to make us aware of the sociological forces. He uses two techniques. In the first incident with Ruthera, the reader/listener is aware of what actually happened and can see how the incident is mythicized in the public imagination. In the second incident, the reader as well as the government and the people in the fictional world do not know. In the first instance then, the reader sees the myth-making as it functions and in the second participates in it. After Matigari's explanation however, the myth is exploded and the reader is not relieved like the priest but is confronted with a host of questions. Does the priest qualify as a believer? What is faith? Is there a difference between believed religion and ved religion? What is living myth and dead myth? Is myth a system of beliefs that are true or a set of false beliefs? What is the responsibility of the church? Is it guilty of tacit support to an unjust government? Where do truth and reality lie? While belief in the Angel Gabriel opening the prison door is latently false, the impact it has on the perceptions of the people is vitally true. It brings about transformation. The demythicizing process draws our attention to the binary oppositions inherent in the situation, as is evident in the above questions.

It also becomes evident that there are two myth-making processes at work in opposition to one another. One is the myth propagated by the
vernment, that it is the government of the people and the workers, the vernment that protects the truth and imparts justice. The Voice of Truth d Justice and all the media under the control of the Government, the people like Settler Williams and John Boy who perpetrate the rule by peasement, assist in its myth making process. Those who are engaged in a can immediately see through the myth-making of the opposing kind. The vernment makes every effort to capture Matigari and reveal to the people at he is an ordinary man, a criminal in the eyes of the law, who will be blicly punished for his crimes. The popular imagination that is fed by the eams and aspirations of the people works in the opposite direction. mething in the collective unconscious of the poor is touched and dreams t stirred. The effect is that they begin to create a mythical hero whom they n venerate, who helps them to have faith in themselves for the first time, aling them to act. They are made to see through the myth created by His cellency Ole Excellence and are determined to defy it. They have seen with help of Matigari, that lies are decreed to be truth and truth is distorted to pear like a lie. This myth conflict is at the centre of the political and momic conflict in the land.

The climax of the conflict is seen in the final confrontation between Matigari, Settler Williams and the police. The police and security forces verge on John Boy’s house hoping to capture Matigari alive. The news orters, the radio and television crews wait. The hundreds of people who ve gathered there wait to see if Matigari’s prophecy that he would come d reclaim his home and land in three days will come true. Everyone has
question in his mind. Who is Matigari? “People from all religions and
minorities continued streaming toward the house. They carry Bibles,
jes, Korans, rosaries of all sizes and colours. They sang and beat drums.
all waited for Jehovah’s sword to fall from heaven . . . The Final
gment . . . Whatever the whispers of doubt, it was better to be on the safe
just in case . . .” (158). This is what passes for religion and if we declare
this is fear and not faith, what we are looking at is myth in the sense of
belief.

Matigari races through the town to reach John Boy’s house but has to
at the petrol station. There, as he fills in petrol, he sees that the man
e is Giceru, the man who has shared his cell, the informer. Like Judas,
the one to telephone the police and we recall the warning of one of the
ners -- Wherever twelve people are gathered, one of them is an informer.
i is master of different types of irony. In the end however, the police are
by surprise, for what they consider to be the minister’s car rams
gh the door of the house. As the police loudspeakers scream a warning
atigari to surrender, and the search lights flash, a sudden ball of fire
from the house and the people sing in joy. At the end of the police
we are told that Matigari and the boy Muriuki reach the mugumo tree
on their weapons. Then we remember Matigari’s words spoken earlier,
enemy can never be driven out by words alone, no matter how sound the
ent. Nor can the enemy be driven out by force alone. But words of
and justice fully backed by armed power, will certainly drive the enemy
38).
What is striking is that Matigari does not exploit the myth that is ling around him. Being a genuine seeker of truth and justice, we find he has true religion and faith. When the children ask him plainly if he is One whose Second Coming is prophesied, the Lord who will bring the Jerusalem here on earth, Matigari says, “The God who is prophesied is u, in me and in other humans. He has always been there inside us since eginning of time. Imperialism has tried to kill that God within us. But ay that God will come alive and liberate us who believe in Him. I am reaming” (156). We are reminded of what Gutheria’s father had told her the true church. The real church of God resides in peoples’ hearts. The re mere edifices.

From the standpoint of Frye, Ngugi has created the archetypal ur figure who appeals to the mythical imagination of the people. ver, Matigari’s own position is that both the myths, the one created by people and the one propagated by the government are false. Though the created by the people serves the purpose of creating a hope for change, uld not be exploited because the tactic of the revolutionary then es no different from that of the government in creating a false belief. er has shown that any political leader can build up and use a myth is. Barthes on the other hand, asserts that for the true revolutionary, can be no myth. His language is “de-politicized speech”. It is only the that is rich in myth. The two myth systems in the novel are the ns of the Right, even though they are in conflict with one another.
Matigari is positioned outside both of them for he is the true revolutionary. It fits in with the Marxist outlook of Ngugi himself.

No one can deny the political intentions of Ngugi in writing Matigari Gikuyu, for he clearly wanted to communicate to the masses. Abdulrazak Gurnah, in 'Matigari: A Tract of Resistance', sees it as a call to armed struggle, for Ngugi says in the novel, "the enemy can never be driven out by one alone, no matter how sound the argument." But to dismiss the novel, Gurnah does, as being "a simple and unattractive polemic" is to ignore the dilemmas, the irony, satire and humour that makes the novel art. Gurnah also feels that Ngugi's views, expressed as Matigari's vision, "is just as profoundly authoritarian as the one it seeks to replace." This clash of narratives is inevitable when the writer is politically committed.

It is Ngugi's attitude to Christianity that has baffled critics. David Brown points out that the attitude has changed over the years. Initially, Ngugi thought that Christianity was integral to imperialism. Later, it seems to have realized the possibility of using it for political purposes. Ngugi himself has explained that he draws from the Bible for the simple reason that it is the only literature available to Kenyan people in their own language. (This no doubt is an ironical reversal of the imperialist view.) Secondly, Brown points out that Ngugi may have encountered an ideology which could well have changed his attitude. Thirdly, the author in Kenya became more outspoken in its criticism of the Government.

In 1986, the Minister of State for Internal Affairs accused Ngugi of being a subversive Christian of Kenya for subversive activities. Fourthly, Ngugi's
historical materialism coincided with some aspects of Christianity. "The inspiration for Matigari stems in part from a recognition of the potential for political mobilization inherent in millenarian religious movements. Matigari's simultaneous status as a Christ-figure and as a symbol of the exploitation of Kenya's working class seems designed to harness that potential to Ngugi's revolutionary cause . . ." (Research In African Literature Winter, 1991:178). (This seems to fit Te Kooti's achievement as well.) Brown quotes Terence Ranger, who sums it up well:

"... it is clear that we cannot imaginatively fathom African religious movements merely by spelling out the kind of sense they make in secular, academic terminology—merely by translating an argument of images into imageless discourse. Religious movements were the most effective responses because they were religious; that is, because they could draw on all the ambiguous power of myth and symbol and ritual; because they could mean many things at once and contain many potentialities" (Qtd. by Brown 179).

It is interesting to see if resistance fiction or protest fiction can be adequately analyzed by structuralism. From the Levi-Straussian standpoint, we can see the two myth systems as the overall binary opposition that organizes both the thought and the structure. Within this overall opposition, one can identify many other binary pairs that are at work in the various episodes in the novel. They may be listed as follows:
The myth of Matigari created by the people

Native
Black
Nationalist
Revolutionary
Poor
Exploited
Landless
Powerless
Struggling
Inferior
Subaltern
Worker
Periphery

The myth of the Christian Democracy

Foreign
White
Imperialist
Loyalist
Rich
Exploiter
Landowner
Empowered
Established
Superior
Ruler
Capitalist
Centre

Between the pairs of binary opposites we can position two characters, Matigari and the Minister, who act as negotiators for power. In this they may be viewed as the trickster of the African tale. Though Ngugi himself never mentions the trickster in the novel, the tales are so widespread that a reader, especially an African reader may view it in those terms. The trickster is essentially a power broker. One could use the pattern of analysis created by Jay Edwards in his essay titled ‘Structural Analysis of the Afro-American Trickster Tale’ (Gates Jr. 1984). Edwards says that the tale is an oral literary device for exposing the logical consequences which flow from the conjunction
of two or more pairs of sememic contrasts. His diagrammatic representation is given below:

Anansi (Trickster)

Contract Formation Phrase          Contract Dissolution Phrase


a            b          a            b          a            b          a            b

When applied to Matigari we can see that there are two trickster figures, Matigari and the Minister. The initial lack would be the loss of freedom and dispossession. The contract would be to obtain freedom and repossess the land. This entails a value exchange. However the neo-colonialist Minister has tricked the people and gained power and wealth for himself. This trick is discovered and exposed by Matigari who tries to initiate counter moves. The Minister on the other hand would like the people to believe that the value exchange has taken place and he views Matigari as the trickster who tries to de-stabilize the political and economic situation by becoming the power centre himself. The Minister wishes to discover and expose the trick and initiates counter moves. The novel however does not provide the outcome as success or failure, for Matigari wants the people to realize that the power
transaction lies not in the hands of Matigari or the Minister but in their hands. This is Ngugi’s message to his people through the novel.

Whatever may be the approach used for analysis, the final meaning of the novel remains unchanged. It is an attempt to recall the revolutionary spirit of the Iregi. It is an attempt to instill hope and a desire for change. It is the subaltern voice speaking against the injustices of the regime. Here, we must note that Ngugi reacts strongly to the expression “indigenous literature” for it is counterpointed with “metropolitan literature”. The terms are inadequate because all cultures are hybrid and continue to evolve. In his speech titled ‘The Tension Between National and Imperialist Culture’ Ngugi asks, “Are there some countries which have only ‘indigenous’ and others only ‘metropolitan’ cultures? In other words, are the two terms describing known quantities, qualities or categories of culture in the world, in the same way as we sometimes talk about peasant and working-class cultures or about capitalist and socialist cultures? I feel uncomfortable because I feel there is something being hidden by the terms ‘indigenous’ and ‘metropolitan’ or rather there is something not being said” (WLWE Vol. 24 No.1, 1984:3). In the final analysis, he says, the tension is between ‘national and democratic’ and ‘imperialist’ culture and the issues will be fought out in the language of the people. His experience in the project called Kamiriithu Community and Cultural Centre proves this. Ngugi wrote the novel Matigari in Kikuyu and we understand why it was banned. Ngugi’s passionate concern for the welfare of the people is communicated by this novel and it will continue to have a high place in the literature of Kenya, and the English speaking world.