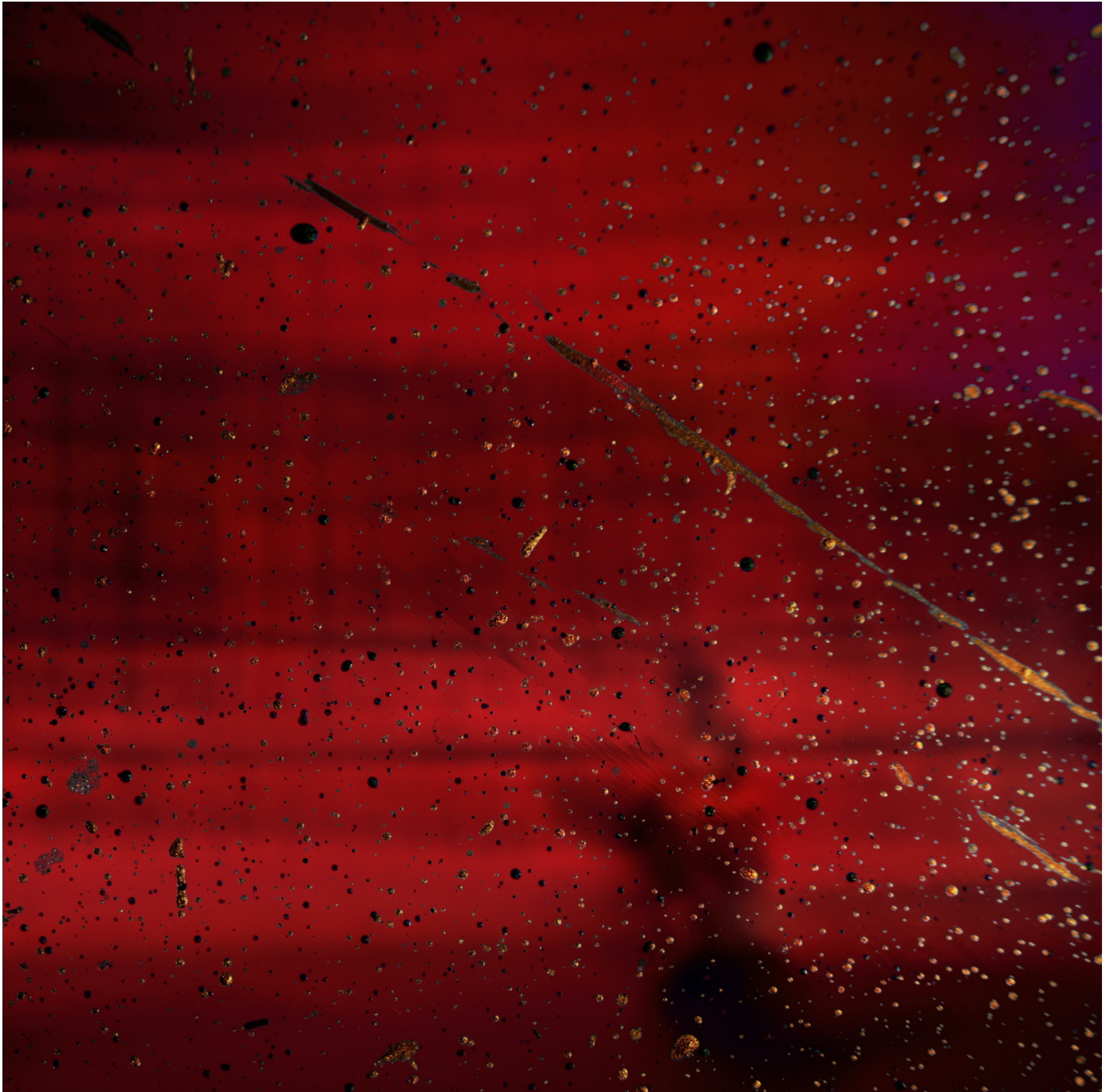




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Liberation Mythology:

The Nature and Function of Colonial Myths in Ngũgĩ's Makarere Novels

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Abstract

Ngũgĩ's *The River Between* and *Weep Not, Child*, are seminal texts of decolonial African fiction. Situating Kenyan history as a “heroic resistance to foreign domination”, Ngũgĩ entangles the historical archive with heroic and foundational myths, blurring the boundaries of national history and national mythology. Affirming Joseph Mali’s formulation that “historical myths [may] be redefined as histories that are not merely told but actually lived”, Ngũgĩ side steps written archives, explores popular oral tradition, and reconstructs a populist historical narrative “that shines with [the] grandeur of heroic resistance and achievement”.

However, a look at the mythology enmeshed in Ngũgĩ's historical novels reveals a deviation from traditional Gikuyu folktale. Ngũgĩ creates new myths adopting general stories, themes, and characters from Gikuyu mythology. By purposely cohering historical events, and deliberately distancing his myths from narratives fixed in the national conscious, Ngũgĩ structures a mythology that is unapologetically aware of its own formulation. As such, I propose that as a meta-mythology—that is, a constructed set of myths aware of their own artifice—Ngũgĩ's texts should be seen as a critique on the nature of Gikuyu myths during colonial resistance.

Keywords: *mythology; postcolonial; Ngũgĩ; cultural difference; African novel*

Participating in a political demonstration, *Weep Not, Child*'s Kiarie stands before a multitude on the eve of the Mau Mau rebellion and moves them with his speech. The Kenyan workers are ready to strike as they demand fair pay from white land-owners and industrialists. In a “low, sad voice” Kiarie addresses his fellow Kenyans and “recounted history,” saying: “All the land belonged to the

people—black people. They had been given it by God. Africans had Africa, the land of black people. Who did not know that all the soil in this part of the country had been given to Gikuyu and Mumbi and their posterity?”¹ Kiarie’s rousing account reaches back to prehistory, recalling the divine gift of land to the Gikuyu people’s ancestors. His invocation of myth, which awakens the crowd, shines light on the power of mythology as a catalyst and driving force in both Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o’s *Makerere* novels, *Weep Not, Child* and *The River Between* where the genesis Kiarie invokes is first established.²

In the demonstration, the invocations of myth animates the participants and helps morph the protest into a violent tumult. Beginning in 1952, the Mau Mau Uprising was the last of many violent nationalist movements against British imperialism. Since the late 1840’s the British Empire held land in Mombasa, a coastal city in present day Kenya—it’s presence legitimated by Indian Ocean trade agreements with the Sultanate of Zanzibar. However, it wasn’t until four decades later that the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC) began the conquest of Kenyan highlands. Declared “The Protectorate of Kenya” in 1895, Kenyan highlands were transformed from “a footpath” to a full “colonial administration” in just ten years.³ Though much of the acquisition was bought from and bartered with native inhabitants, resistance to forceful land expropriation was met with speedy and brutal suppression. It is this history of resistance which most concerns Ngũgĩ’s first novels.

As Kenya’s most celebrated author, Ngũgĩ’s publishing career includes seven novels, three collections of shorts stories, a number of memories and plays alike, and an influential collection of essays and monographs on literary criticism, critical and postcolonial theory.⁴ Although most of Ngũgĩ’s life work deals with colonialism

in its varying forms (territorial Imperialism proper, neo-colonialism, coloniality, etc.), his first two novels, both written while an undergraduate at Makerere University deal with states of emergency during Kenya’s colonial period. Both *Weep Not, Child* and *The River Between* (hereafter *Weep* and *River*, respectively), were given to Chinua Achebe—author of *Things Fall Apart*—as manuscripts during the 1962 “African Writer’s Conference.” Published two and three years later, respectively, *Weep* and *River* entered the corpus of seminal decolonial texts as the first two East African novels ever published in English; and indeed, the description of decolonial is appropriate as, by the author’s own description, *Weep* and *River* are attempts to abrogate what he considers Western and neo-colonial historiography.⁵ Thus, Ngũgĩ composes his first two novels to highlight an existent, complex, pre-modern African society and its long history of adapted resistance to imperialism. To do so, he employs the Gikuyu myths available to him at the times of the resistance.

However, a look at the myths that course through Ngugi’s first two novels reveals a divergence from traditional Gikuyu lore. Rather than weaving existing myths into his stories, or simply reframing them in the novel form, Ngugi creates new myths—his *own myths*. By purposely cohering events, and deliberately distancing his myths from popular narratives, Ngũgĩ offers an artifice. This artifice, or rather, this meta-mythology, is a constructed set of myths aware of its own fabrication; hence, it should be seen as a critique, as a commentary on the nature of the available material which Ngugi deliberately skirts: the popular, national myths recited at times of colonial resistance. In its commentary, Ngugi’s meta-mythology demonstrates that although nationalist, the myths invoked during colonial resistance, and as colonial resistance, are not essentialist.⁶ It does this at two levels: first, Ngugi’s meta-mythology demonstrates

that although Gikuyu myths are precolonial and even transcendent, Gikuyu mythology—and identity—cannot be imagined outside of the scope of modern colonialism. They are (Gikuyu mythology and identity, that is), as Homi Bhabha describes, phenomena of cultural difference;⁷ they are enunciations.⁸ And as enunciations, they only exist in concurrence with the presence of the Other, or rather, with colonialism, and not independently. Second, Ngugi's meta-mythology contests airs of essentialist sentiments by portraying the Gikuyu myths during/as colonial resistance as composed by many voices. By often being competing or contradictory, these voices constitute something of a harmonious tension, or perhaps agonistic unity; they are by nature, polyphonous.

Historian Joseph Mali affirms that “historical myths might be simply redefined as those stories that are not merely told but actually lived.”⁹ As such, mythologies, and the myths that compose them, can also be understood as inherently religious; that is, if one accepts Craig Calhoun's position on the construction of the religious and the secular as temporal subjects. Calhoun argues that the religious is a subject founded as a contrary position towards the secular—a cycle or demarcation of temporality (and its coterminous, spatiality). The religious, then, points to a transcendence of temporal markers.¹⁰ Thus, the mythology invoked and constructed in the Ngugi's novels, although about the past, are concomitantly significant to the contemporary colonial setting they were written in, as well as transcendentally pertinent to the future.

In this vein, Ato Sekyi-Otu addresses this aspect of mythology in his seminal essay, “The Refusal of Agency.”¹¹ Sekyi-Otu argues that in *The River Between* the importance of the structure of the founding myth hinges on a conditional provision. He contends that the land given to the Gikuyu is not simply a gift but what

seems to be a “divine dispensation [that] turns out to be a fiduciary ordinance, an ethical-political covenant. The land is not to be the object of a votive naturalism: it is for the people to ‘rule and till.’” In this way, Sekyi-Otu confirms that the founding narrative “signifies the foundation, origin, and source not of the community's self-knowledge, but of its self-apprehension, not of Kikuyu being, but of the Kikuyu mode of being in the world.”¹² His argument implies that the form of Ngugi's rendition of the myth informs Gikuyu identity, particularly in a colonial setting. Nonetheless, Sekyi-Otu's consideration of myth stops at *The River Between*, deconstructing the narrative as a self-contained text; and it is. But, if one were to consider *Weep* and *River* as a spiritual set—accounting for the mythic recitals that dot them—then Ngugi's protracted deployment of myths clarify as a meta-mythology that comments on the myths produced or uttered during the colonial era.

Apollo O. Amoko continued Sekyi-Otu's work in his essay “The Resemblance of Colonial Mimicry: A Revisionary Reading of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *The River Between*,” demonstrating that far from being simplistic, it is an exemplary text which manifests “Homi Bhabha's terms of colonial mimicry...riddled with ambivalence, ambiguity and slippage.”¹³ Even though the novel embodies a traditional ‘English aesthetic’ by mimicking style and even emulating biblical tropes, it produces undeniable ambivalence; that is, to use Bhabha's phrasing: it is almost the same, but not quite. It produces an English aesthetic but slips from such form as it very much invested in its own language, both linguistic and symbolic. Focusing on Gikuyu mythology, *River* produces a menacing mimicry in a colonial Kenya. Still, Amoko does not make the connection concerning Ngugi's production of a mimicking myth and its implications as a commentary on the nature of mythology produced or uttered in the colonial context. He neglects to consider

their disparate nature and how such affects said ambivalence.

The most prevalent myths in *River* and *Weep* are the heroic Waiyaki myth and the foundational origins myth. Although the two novels are very different in content, both myths are integral to both texts: *River* deals with the Gikuyu hero Waiyaki—his education, and his mission as an anointed messiah to unite the Gikuyu ridges to form a front against the English settlers, while *Weep* centres on Njoroge, a Gikuyu school boy living through the rise of the Mau Mau rebellion. Throughout the novels, these myths appear in different variations. These variations speak about each other, contradict each other, and indicate their own contemporary creation and usage. Thus, the novels present a self-aware meta-mythology demonstrating its polyphonous nature.

The Myth of Waiyaki

As a meta-myth, the heroic Waiyaki story, which is the narrative focus of *The River Between*, is not an intended representation of actual Gikuyu folklore. It is a consciously devised amalgamation of stories evoking Gikuyu lore and colonial Kenyan history, using names, events, and narrative patterns that resonate in emergent Gikuyu nationalist conscious. What is known about the real Waiyaki Wa Hinga is actually very little. The IBEAC archives concerning Kenyan highlands circa 1890 are scarce and undoubtedly biased. Furthermore, Western historiography has been contested by Gikuyu oral histories. According to the written archive, we know Waiyaki was understood by the IBEAC to be a leader of the Gikuyu; he was a willing negotiator which allowed them movement across the highlands and sold them land to use as a trading post.¹⁴ By 1892, Waiyaki's men and the IBEAC had two violent clashes on account of

appropriated land; and according to an article by Brigadier General Herbert H. Austin, the “treacherous” Waiyaki launched an “unprovoked” and “murderous attack” on an IBEAC representative soon after.¹⁵

The Gikuyu oral history seems more complete, though is probably no less biased. Waiyaki Wa Hinga, according to Gikuyu history, was the son of an ethnic Maasai man and Gikuyu woman. His father, Hinga, had been adopted by the Gikuyu after his mother escaped an ongoing Maasai war. Waiyaki was elected ruler of the Gikuyu after fulfilling an oath and killing Naleo, a Maasai warrior who led many victorious raids against the Gikuyu. In about 1890, sometime after his election, Waiyaki entered into an agreement with Captain Lugard of IBEAC to settle a trading post in Gikuyu land as a halfway point between Mombasa and Uganda in exchange for peace and rifles. There were two subsequent violations of the treaty that ended in bloodshed. Many IBEAC Swahili and Indian porters died and the Gikuyu emerged victorious. On the evening of August 16, 1892, the angered manager of the post, Henry Porter, invited an inebriated Waiyaki to negotiate a peace agreement, and resulted in clubbing him on the head and chaining him to the flagpole.¹⁶ The next day Waiyaki was exiled to Kibwezi, a town northeast of Mombasa. Waiyaki's last words, which echoed in Gikuyu nationalist sentiment, were “you must never surrender one inch of our soil to foreigners, for if you do, future children will die of starvation.” Waiyaki never made it to Kibwezi, dying from untreated wounds. He was buried head-first (feet up) in a small hole along the way.¹⁷

Ngũgĩ's version of Waiyaki elides western archives and merely touches upon Gikuyu oral history. So, there is no question that this Waiyaki is a deliberate concoction, a fusion of Colonial Kenyan history orbiting a ubiquitous hero. In *River* alone he deliberately strings

together the events of the first colonial encounters in the 1880's; the death of Waiyaki in 1892; the female circumcision controversy with the Scottish Methodist Church in 1929; and the development of independent Gikuyu Schools during the 1930's. In *River* these events are woven around Ngũgĩ's fictional Waiyaki from about age eight to his death as a young adult, condensing the historical events of colonial Kenya to a period of fifteen to twenty years. In cohering these events, Ngũgĩ's history disregards historical, linear time in favor of higher, mythical time—one that memorializes these successions as one saga, one event.

River's Waiyaki also permeates in *Weep Not, Child*. Set at least a generation in the future during the Mau Mau rebellion, references to Ngũgĩ's version of the Waiyaki myth, in contrast to the more standard versions, signals an active awareness of its own conception and repeated deployment. As explored later in this essay, allusions to Waiyaki are activated towards the end of the novel to question ideas of messianism and its inherent promotion of patience. Undoubtedly, the narratives surrounding Ngũgĩ's Waiyaki are a deliberate construction of myth, especially as his narrative in no way resembles the historical figure. By consciously cohering events, and deliberately distancing his Waiyaki myth from the heroic narratives fixed in the national conscious, Ngũgĩ structures a myth that is unapologetically aware of its own formulation. As a purposely constructed myth during the Kenyan struggle for independence, the Waiyaki myth should be seen as a commentary on colonial myth itself—specifically on its nature and function.

Ngũgĩ's Waiyaki myth, exhibited in *River* and explored in *Weep*, helps demonstrate the nature of colonial mythology as a phenomenon of "enunciation": the action or continuous process of constructing an Other's

culture as an object of knowledge while simultaneously constructing one's own, as an axiom of self-identification.¹⁸ Firstly, as speech, the Waiyaki myth *in general* (not Ngũgĩ's version), is uttered during a state of colonialism as an evocation of national Gikuyu history. Its narration in a colonial state elicits a reflection on the history and natures of resistance. In turn, this reflection calls for a consideration of national identity, as in: what are we resisting? *Who* are we resisting? Accordingly, Ngũgĩ mentions that these are the types of stories, or histories that shape an image of the Kenyan people; it is the stories of "heroic resistance to foreign domination" and "histories [that] shine with grandeur" that are spoken as a part of the process of national introspection.¹⁹ Hence, the very evocation of the Waiyaki myth, which can be seen as an invocation of struggle, is at the same time an enunciation of national identity and culture. This enunciation (the utterance of the Waiyaki myth) establishes a difference between the Gikuyu nation and the colonizer, thus attesting to how colonial mythology, when rooted in resistance, is a process of cultural differentiation.

While Ngũgĩ's reiteration of the Waiyaki myth exists as part of said process, it also helps to exemplify the nature of the colonial myth as diverse and polyphonous. Ngũgĩ's version of the Waiyaki myth is presented as a clear juxtaposition of the traditional narratives spoken by colonized Kenyans during the political struggle for independence. Carol Sicherman explains that the stories told of Waiyaki are varied, but they mostly concur that he was "Gikuyu warrior-leader who took up arms with other Gikuyu against the invasion of the Kenyan highlands by the British."²⁰ In stark contrast to the traditional Waiyaki myths told by the Gikuyu, Ngũgĩ presents a very different version. Ngũgĩ's text seems to adopt Christian traditions, staging the Gikuyu hero's life echoing biblical tropes as Waiyaki's projection as saviour crystalizes in

the eschatology of both protagonist and novel. Ngũgĩ's Waiyaki reflects the biblical Jesus from the onset as his alleged heritage foregrounds his journey; Waiyaki, according to his father, was "the last in the line of great seer who prophesied of a black messiah from the hills."²¹ As a prophesied figure, Ngũgĩ draws parallels of prophesiers and prophesied(s) between Christian and Gikuyu traditions. One of *River's* antagonists, Joshua—a Christian convert—finds solace in the prophet Isaiah's predictions of Jesus. Joshua asks: "Had Mugo wa Kibiro, the Gikuyu seer, ever foretold of such a savior? No. Isaiah was great. He had told of Jesus, the saviour of the world".²² Unbeknownst to Joshua, as Isaiah predicted Jesus, Mugo predicted a saviour, Waiyaki. The parallel between Waiyaki and the Jesus of the Christian canon is most obvious in the novel's climax. Because Waiyaki has been mixing with Gikuyu Christians and establishing modern schools in the region, his loyalty to his people and their culture is questioned by the *Kiama* (group of village elders). Following the biblical narrative, Waiyaki is conspired against and is subjected to a farcical—and pharisaical—trial. Even after speaking to his people "like a shepherd speaking to his flock", asking them, "can a house divided stand?", his trial ends in his condemnation a satisfied, yet guilty mob, and a darkness that subsequently consumes the land.²³

This configuration of Waiyaki as a Jesus-like figure has been noted by Amoko. However, contrary to Amoko's assertions, this representation need not be read as an example of colonial mimicry. Colonial mimicry implies the event of slippage as an end, as "mimicry continuously produces its slippage, its excess, its difference."²⁴ This is not necessarily the case with *River's* Waiyaki. The end may very well be the opposite of slippage, if slippage were a manifestation of difference. What perhaps is at play here, with such a configuration of Waiyaki, is an elicitation of self-recognition. Writing on Ngũgĩ's

Christian symbolism in *A Grain of Wheat*, Govind Narain Sharma contends that Ngũgĩ is a "religious writer"—and before his conversion to atheism, this would ring true.²⁵ After such conversion, this may still be debatable as Ngũgĩ's works continue to be speckled with Christian allusion and motifs. On this paradox, Ngũgĩ has stated that he has often "drawn from the Bible" because "the Bible was for a long time the only literature available to Kenyan people."²⁶ It would follow that a Jesus-figure would be easy for a Kenyan audience to identify. Moreover, in a predominantly observant, Christian population, a Waiyaki figure pregnant with Christian ethics, morals, and aspirations would also be easy to identify with. And here we can better identify the nature and function of mythology, particular with its diversity. As religious objects, that is transcendental texts, myths exceed secular cycles (or determined timeframes, such as generations) and are then adopted and adapted, even by ideologically altered nations. Their diversity, and here polyphony, allow for different portions of populations to identify with. In the case of Waiyaki, who in all iterations is determined to struggle, in one way or another, against the British, both Christians and non-Christians can identify with a call to action.²⁷

As for a non-Christian recognition of Waiyaki, *Weep Not, Child* offers an example. Though Waiyaki is not once mentioned in *Weep*, his myth is very much resonant. One evening, Njoroge and his family gather around the patriarch, Ngotho, and listens to him tell the story of the creation of the first man and woman: Gikuyu and Mumbi. As he tells them about the land given to them by Murungo, the Creator, he recalls the loss of their ancestral lands to the British, saying that the "white man [came] as long had been prophesied by the Mugo wa Kabiro, that Gikuyu seer of old;"²⁸ however, Mugo wa Kabiro prophesied restitution as well. When asked if he thought the prophecy of the restitution of land would be

completed, Ngotho told them: “Once in the country of ridges...a man rose. People thought that he was the man who had been sent to drive away the white man. But he was killed by wicked people because he said people should stand together.”²⁹ Here, the figure of Waiyaki as uniter and liberator emerges detached of any notions of Christian messiahship. The only ideals present in such recitation are those of national unity and territorial autonomy.

Foundational Myth Variations

The myth of origin, or the foundational narrative related in the first passages of *The River Between*, and then reiterated in later chapters, is perhaps the most important narrative of the internal mythology between these two novels. This is because one of the most important aspects of myths of origin is the authentication of national identity. Mali argues that historical communities, like religions or nations, consist of the shared beliefs that their members have about them[selves]. Mali suggests that the very fabric of historical communities, and nations, are made up of these very narratives; or rather, that the myths themselves constitute such communities.³⁰

At its core, according to Gerishon Ngau Mwuara Kirika, the Gikuyu myth of origin narrates that *Ngai* (God), the omnipotent, transcendent/immanent deity and creator of all things, created Gikuyu (man). *Ngai* then placed Gikuyu at the top of Mount Kenya and showed him the Valley below, conferring this land unto him and his posterity so long he prayed and sacrificed to Him. Later, Gikuyu was given a wife, Mumbi (creator/molder). Mumbi bore nine daughters and after prayer and sacrifice, *Ngai* gave them nine men with whom the daughters could procreate. The nine tribes come from

these nine couples and the names of the tribes carry the names of Gikuyu and Mumbi’s daughters.³¹

Here, it is important to note that Ngũgĩ offers no deviation; there really couldn’t be any. The Gikuyu foundational myth does not exist as a written text, an authoritative archive which can be referenced for veracity. Instead, the Gikuyu foundation myth exists in an oral context, as Sekyi-Otu stresses, and thus in many different variations. Since there isn’t one version of the foundation myth in Gikuyu lore, or in Ngũgĩ’s novels, its use in *Weep* and *River* should be seen as a device used to explore the nature of mythic recitations. As a device, the foundation myth in the novels should be considered a meta-myth, a story within a story. As a story in *The River Between*, the foundation myth becomes a reference point for the rest of the mythology, informing characters about their own identity and plight. It dictates Waiyaki’s motivations as he becomes keeper of the myth, struggling to bring back his nation to the point of origin. In *Weep Not, Child*, the foundational narrative accords native characters the rights to native lands and inspires resistance within the community. It also mediates protagonist Njorge’s understanding of the colonial situation. The myth pervades both novels but is recounted by different individuals and affects characters in different manners. Its very ubiquity implies a self-unawareness, signaling attention to its function within the novels and the nature of myth in colonial settings.

From the opening passages of *River*, the foundational myth establishes Gikuyu nationhood by linking the Gikuyu nation to Gikuyu and Mumbi. At the same time, it emphatically declares the Gikuyu rights to land. The narration directly and explicitly states that God showed Gikuyu and Mumbi all the land and told them “this land I give to you O man and woman. It is yours to rule and till, you and your posterity.” Its pithy prose highlights the

straightforward message as if an axiom of national Gikuyu logic. The Gikuyu nation is the progeny of Gikuyu and Mumbi and the soil of the ridges is theirs to till. The only contention or discord demonstrated in the myth's first iteration concerns the ridge from where Gikuyu and Mumbi observed the land: "Not all people believed him for had it not always been whispered and rumored that Gikuyu and Mumbi had stopped at Kamenoi?"³² Whether or not the land (the entire ridges) had been given to the Gikuyu, as Gikuyu and Mumbi's posterity is not for debate. Moreover, the mention of "had it not always been whispered," demonstrates that such understanding is constituent to the Gikuyu nation, stretching back to its foundation—that the nation and consanguine myth is as old as speech itself.

The next recitation of the foundation myth echoes the same sentiment: "Murungu brought the man and woman here and showed them the whole vastness of the land, He gave the country to them and their children and the children of their children".³³ As per divine decree, the land belongs to Gikuyu and Mumbi and their progeny. The difference in this iteration is the description of Gikuyu and Mumbi's posterity. This rendition is narrated by Waiyaki's father. Such narration inculcates the importance of the land and subsequent recognition the impending threat that is the white man's encroachment. The phrase "their children and the children of their children" clarifies that the land does not rightfully and providentially belong only to Gikuyu and Mumbi and their immediate children—that posterity does not only refer to the first generation. His father's words imply that the blessing of land upon Gikuyu and Mumbi's posterity is indefinite.

The foundational myth in the Makerere novels sets a precedent to Gikuyu nationalism; it establishes Gikuyu rights to land and, as Sekyi-Otu argues, is "an indication

of Gikuyu being- an active identity."³⁴ This narrative production by Ngũgĩ's is an enunciation of selfhood in a colonial setting, an authentication of autonomous identity. Along these lines, the repetitive recitation of the foundation myth can be seen as performing Frantz Fanon's description of the search for a national culture. Fanon affirms that the

passionate quest for a national culture prior to the colonial era can be justified by the colonized intellectuals' shared anxiety in stepping back and taking a hard look at the Western culture in which they risk becoming ensnared...[and] determine to renew contact once more with the oldest and most pre-colonial springs of life of their people.³⁵

Here, Fanon describes the work of colonized intellectual's struggling to locate the history and culture of their nation in contestation to the European colonizer. The prevalence of the foundational myth in the Makerere novels is such an attempt. The focus on the foundational mythologies in a colonial context is a reaction to colonial hegemony, revisiting this social charter to affirm origins and identities.

More specifically, in analyzing attempts to foment a national identity Simon Gikandi agrees that it would be imperceptive to view such event outside a framework of colonialism:

It is impossible to talk of a Gikuyu culture outside the discourse of colonialism. Although Gikuyu temporality inscribes itself by invoking an ancient history - *hingoya ndemi na mathathi* - the people who have come to be known under this corporate identity invented themselves to meet the challenges of colonial rule and domination.³⁶

Hence, even though the foundational myth is about times immemorial – eluding the grasp of historicity, and precluding any colonial encounter – its narration in the present marks it as a product of colonialism. So, at the colonial encounter there is an utterance, that is, a proclamation of self and of culture in the face of an Other. In the case of the *River* and *Weep*, the foundational myth functions as an utterance, thus proclaiming Gikuyu identity as that of the posterity of Gikuyu and Mumbi. At the same time, the text itself performs Gikuyu culture by transmitting oral traditions.

In this procedure of utterance lies a process of cultural translation, where each agent (individual or communal) tries to understand the culture of the other using his very own cultural parameters as a point of reference. Concerning this phenomena and the Gikuyu nation in colonized Kenya, Gikandi explains:

Both colonizer and colonized were...trying to invent their traditions and selves in relation to the realities of the other. The British colonial authority...sought to reorganize the Gikuyu ...positioning them in a cultural grid which emphasized white supremacy and the benign authority of colonization. The Gikuyu, in turn, carefully remade and rewrote their cultural narratives and moral economy...valorizing centralizing narratives of common descent, calling attention to a common mythological pantheon, and privileging histories and temporalities that would put them, morally and conceptually, on equal terms with their colonizers.³⁷

In this context Ngũgĩ's foundation myth in *River* should be understood less as a pre-colonial myth and more of a reiteration whose function is to comment on the history and present conditions of colonial Kenya.

Furthermore, the value of the myth is not interrupted by the temporal limit that is present. The myth, as a 'religious' text, maintains its value in its transcendental nature and potential.

The myth's potential is shown when its ideas are invoked in *Weep*. For example, when Kiarie announces to the restless crowd that "all the land belonged...had been given to Gikuyu and Mumbi and their posterity,"³⁸ his invocation does not add anything new to the myth; it only repeats what has always been known: that the land was given to Gikuyu and Mumbi. As a narrative of the origin of the nation and its relation to the land, the myth becomes completely relevant to the contemporary situation. The Gikuyu nation is Gikuyu and Mumbi's posterity and the land is theirs to "rule and till in serenity," not to be worked for the profit others.³⁹ The potential of the myth is indeed fulfilled, as the axiom of Gikuyu nationhood rings in Ngotho's head and moves him to act as a vehicle for divine birthright. He attacks a black 'traitor' on stage and sparks a violent beginning to the labor strike.

Looking at the foundational myth in the *River* and *Weep* in this context clarifies its nature as an invocation; as opposed to a repetition of a story of national beginnings, it is an invocation of agency and an authorization of autonomy—an utterance of perennial selfhood. If the nature of the foundational myth in the novels is understood as invocations of national genesis and national rights, then such a myth is consequently an event of cultural differentiation.

Furthermore, the invocations of the foundational myth in the novels also demonstrate the nature of the colonial myth as disparate and polyphonous. *The River Between* begins with a narration of the founding myth:

It began long ago. A man rose in Makuyu. He claimed that Gikuyu and Mumbi sojourned there with Murungu on their way to Mukuruwe wa Gathanga. As a result of that stay, he said, leadership had been left to Makuyu. Not all the people believed him. For had it not always been whispered and rumoured that Gikuyu and Mumbi had stopped at Kamenó? And had not a small hill grown out of the soil on which they stood south of Kamenó? And Murungu had told them: "This land I give to you, O man and woman. It is yours to rule and till, you and your posterity."⁴⁰

Since its first exposition, the foundation narrative is presented with a sense of ambiguity. The origins of the narrative are unexplained. As a myth there is no author, or authority to determine veracity. Sekyi-Otu explains that the "the story of beginnings is apocryphal and unauthorized. Neither reporter nor referent, neither subject nor object, are accredited with unequivocal, transcendental authority."⁴¹ The claims of a man rising in Makuyu is done anonymously. The proclamation of Gikuyu and Mumbi's sojourn in Makuyu has no attributable source for sake of record or verification. Demonstrating the ambiguous nature of the anonymous myth, the question, "for had it not always been whispered and rumored that Gikuyu and Mumbi had stopped at Kamenó?" points out this contradiction. The nameless man who "rose in Makuyu" asserts one location of national origin, while others vocalize a different narrative, asserting a different location of origin. Such question, as a counter claim, is also uttered without any authorial identity. This lack of sole authorship, for Sekyi-Otu, signifies a lack of 'transcendental authority.' The authority, accordingly, is allotted to the murmurers and whisperers. Thus, the details of the myth are open to change, and variation, contingent only on the

whisperer(s) and the consent of the listener(s), making the nature of the foundation myth divergent and polyvocal.

The original reiteration demonstrates the divergent nature of the myth from the inception of the text. The man who rose in Makuyu had claimed that it was there that the creator Murungu bestowed upon Gikuyu and Mumbi the land in sight. The proclamation of the man that rose from Makuyu marks it as a terrestrial focus of spirituality. Since Makuyu was the hill where the divine interacted with the progenitors and where revelation occurred, bequeathing sovereignty over the land, it is consecrated and raised to supremacy over the other ridges of the inlands. Still, the anonymous "man who rose" was not believed by his contemporaries as they had a different version of the story: "For had it not always been whispered and rumoured that Gikuyu and Mumbi had stopped at Kamenó? And had not a small hill grown out of the soil on which they stood south of Kamenó?" The listeners objected as they had previously heard something different from whisperers who had claimed it was Kamenó, not Makuyu; and such whispers had qualified their murmurs with proof - there was a small hill that had "grown out of the soil" on Kamenó. Hence, the ambiguous nature of the myth, which offers no origins, produces plural versions (competing narratives), establishing a socio-political dispute over the supremacy of the ridges and their respective inhabitants. However, even though the ambiguous nature of the myth produces polyphony, one thing had definitely been established: the land was theirs and they were to rule and till it.

The second time that the foundation narrative is mentioned in *River* it is yet another variation—a new thread to the text. This account, it should be noted, is pivotal to its narrative, and to Ngũgĩ's rendition of the Waiyaki myth, as Waiyaki's life and *raison d'être* is

directly informed by it. Here, Chege takes his son, Waiyaki, up to the hill of God. They sit by a Mugumo tree and Chege asks Waiyaki: “Do you see all of this land, this country stretching beyond and joining the sky? All this is our land... Murungu brought the man and woman here and showed them the whole vastness of the land. He gave the country to them and their children and the children of their children, tene na tene, world without end. Do you see here?”⁴² Waiyaki looks up and sees his father was pointing at the Mugumo tree and the mysterious bush around it. His father announces:

This is a blessed and sacred place. There, where Mumbi’s feet stood, grew up that tree...From here, Murungu took them and put them under Mukuruwe wa Gathanga in Murunga. There our father and mother had nine daughters who bore more children. The children spread all over the country. Some came to the ridges to keep and guard the ancient rites... You descend from those few who came to the hills.⁴³

Chege is feared and respected by the other elders of the tribe, because “he knew more than any other person the ways of the land and the hidden things of the tribe;” thus, in terms of recitation, Chege is sound carrier of tradition, and as such, offers a credible version of the foundational myth.⁴⁴ However, in this reiteration of the myth there are two differences. First, Chege’s variation includes the Mugumo tree, identified earlier by Waiyaki as “a sacred tree” and the “tree of Murungu,” dominated Waiyaki’s soul with its mighty power and presence.⁴⁵ Waiyaki understood that this tree was special, significant. After all, it was from this tree that Gikuyu and Mumbi’s progeny spread. But it was those that returned to the ridges that would protect the ancient rite; Waiyaki “descend[ed] from those few who came to the

hills.”⁴⁶ Here, Chege’s version imbues Waiyaki with a purpose and a mission—one dependent on Waiyaki’s interpretation, of course.

The second difference seen in Chege’s version is the omission of Murungu’s decree regarding tilling the land. In the first account, Murungu declares that the land belongs to Gikuyu and Mumbi “to rule and till, [for them] and [their] posterity.”⁴⁷ Sekyi-Otu argues that this gift of land was conditional. The decree of ruling and tilling as a provision, defined for the Gikuyu a “mode of being.”⁴⁸ However, with Chege’s omission, there is no mandate to till land, and the contract between Gikuyu, Mumbi, and their creator becomes a divine dispensation independent of any circumstances. These two differences, varying in degree of consequence, illustrate a polyphony in the foundation myth.

Weep Not, Child continues the pattern established in *River* by adding variations of the myth. In *Weep* the foundational myth receives a bit more attention and detail than in *River*. It was a custom for Njoroge to sit with his father, mother and siblings listening to stories. His mother told stories frequently. However, it was the patriarch who delivered the emotive rendition of the foundational story before the strike of the black workforce and the eruption of the Mau Mau rebellion.

Ngotho’s version of the foundation myth in *Weep* is lengthier and more detailed than the versions offered in *River*. In Ngotho’s version we receive a view of the world before the inception of Gikuyu and Mumbi: a world in darkness and chaos, with consistent rains afflicting fauna and hindering flora. And in contrast to Chege’s version, Ngotho teaches that God’s tree, Mukuyu, had existed upon God’s mountain before the creation of Gikuyu and Mumbi, and does not choose either Kameno or Makuyu as the location for their creation; his variation of the myth

is not interested in socio-political supremacy of either ridge granted by lore.⁴⁹

Ngotho's version teaches that the appearance of Gikuyu and Mumbi brought light into a world of darkness, making the sun rise and shine, bringing warmth and alleviation for animals.⁵⁰ Seemingly, in this version, Gikuyu and Mumbi were luminaries for the world; acting as divine viceroys, ambassadors, and mediators. This of course, is relevant in the context of the rest of the narrative, as Kenya is a British colony. Ngotho's own situation, working on his father's former land as an employee to Mr. Howlands, a British colonizer, acts as an embodiment for the situation of the entire colonial Kenya. The entire lands of Kenya have been taken from the successors of Gikuyu and Mumbi and thus the land is in anguish and darkness; this explains the fact that Ngotho's version is uninterested in local supremacy between tribes. Rather, the purpose of the myth congeals around the problem of a colonized Kenya.

This problem is constantly meditated on by Njoroge. Speaking to his friend, Mwihaki, about the violence and the colonial situation causing it, Njoroge comforts her, assuring that "peace shall come to this land." When she asked him if he really believed that, Njoroge reassures her by claiming that "sunshine always follows a dark night," and that "the sun shall rise tomorrow."⁵¹ Here, Njoroge makes the connection between the darkness and colonial oppression, inferring that the proverbial sun would shine when the lands were at peace, in the hands of their sovereign, the Gikuyu, just as the myth his father recited implied. Here, the text demonstrates the foundation myth interacting with its social context, reflecting the colonial situation. In doing so, this indicates the solution to the woes of the Gikuyu and the torment of Kenya: the re-establishment of the land in Gikuyu hands. This illustration of interaction demonstrates a flexible

nature to the colonial myth, enabling it to develop into a polyphonous text through its ability to be adapted to changing social conditions. On top of the myth's distinct variations, its nature also allows for layers of interpretation to suit any social context, thus affirming it as multivocal.

However, one of the most important differences in Ngotho's version is the condition that does not appear in the prior versions of the myth. Upon creating Gikuyu and Mumbi, Murungu gives them the land that they see and tells them that they are to rule and till it. Then Murungu adds: "sacrificing only to me, your God, under my tree."⁵² This addendum creates a binary consequence: the continuous enjoyment of God's provision if observant of the mandate, or the negative outcome of breaking it. This variation offers a reason for the colonization of the Gikuyu people, blaming the colonial context on the ancestors who did not heed the foundation myth.

After this, Njoroge could not contain the nostalgia elicited by the affective recitation, he blurted out "where did all the land go?" Overcome with melancholy, Ngotho responds: "maybe...the children of Mumbi forgot to burn a sacrifice to Murungu. So, he did not shed His blessed tears that make crops grow. The sun burnt freely. Plague came to the land. Cattle died and people shrank in size. Then came the white man...and took the land."⁵³ This distinction, which explains the nation's condition, demonstrates the ability of the colonial myth to evolve, diverging into discrete versions, which invites the realization that the myth functions as a polyphonous text.

Finally, in *Weep Not, Child*, there is the introduction of the hybrid myth of origins, created by the amalgamation of Gikuyu folklore and the Christian teachings proliferated by Christian schools established by white colonizers. This hybrid myth, though apparently very different from the previous accounts of Murungu's

dispensation to Gikuyu and Mumbi, maintains certain characteristics that arguably sustains it as Gikuyu myth. Njoroge, a 'hybrid' Gikuyu educated in an English established school,⁵⁴ believes that the "God of love and mercy... long ago walked on this earth with Gikuyu and Mumbi, or Adam and Eve." Njoroge had come to the understanding that Gikuyu and Mumbi were Adam and Eve. This was not a replacement of one tradition for another; this was an adoption and integration of Christian terminology into Gikuyu folklore. To Njoroge, "it did not make much difference that he had come to identify Gikuyu with Adam and Mumbi with Eve." This is possibly because the alteration of the names or even the inclusion of the Garden of Eden story does not negate the traditional Murungu, Gikuyu, and Mumbi myth. In Njoroge's view, Murungu was the same as the Christian God, and he had given a sacred land to Gikuyu and Mumbi (or Adam and Eve). This land was to be theirs and their children's. Like the story of the Garden of Eden, Gikuyu and Mumbi lost the given land due to disobedience of God's decrees. To Njoroge, the Adam and Eve story fits with his father's foundation myth variation wherein Gikuyu and Mumbi, or their posterity, failed to meet Murungu's expectations. Njoroge's hybrid myth can still be considered a Gikuyu foundation myth as it meets some of its most important criteria. It maintains native Gikuyu names (even if they have Hebrew/English equivalents), which helps authenticate Gikuyu origin. It also maintains that the Creator made Gikuyu and Mumbi and placed them in a sacred land and gave it to them. Finally, it maintains, in accordance to his father's version, that Gikuyu and Mumbi lost the land due to their failure to comply with their Creator's decrees. Most importantly however, Njoroge's hybrid version of the Gikuyu myth sustains that the lands rightfully belong to the Gikuyu people. Njoroge's understanding follows: "the Gikuyu people, whose land had been taken by white men,

were no other than the children of Israel about whom he read in the Bible. So although all men were brothers, the black people had a special mission to the world because they were the chosen people of God."⁵⁵

Njoroge's syncretism depicts Gikuyu and Mumbi's descendants as the children of Israel. In Biblical tradition, the children of Israel have a designated land, a land given to their forefather Abraham for his posterity. This land is their divine birth right. In seeing the Gikuyu people as the children of Israel, Njoroge understands that the land of Kenya is the Gikuyu's divine right. This syncretic version, like that of the Christian Waiyaki, allows for the myth to be deployed as an identifiable catalyst for mobilization. Observant Christian Kenyans can easily recognize the underlying motifs of divine dispensation and fulfill the myths potential.

Even though there are different versions of the foundation myth, some with crucial differences, it must be remembered that they all have a locus on which they anchor: the divine Gikuyu rights to the Kenyan highlands. This demonstrates a focused function of the colonial myth despite its disparate nature. Chege's version in *River* teaches Waiyaki that it is through the families of Kameno that divine interaction takes place. Still, the seers are for the entire Gikuyu nation as are the benefits of the prophecy- which include guarding the rights of land to all Gikuyu and expelling the white man. Waiyaki lives this myth and this prophecy and at times tries to be a savior for his people; thus, his main mission is to unite his people, and to educate them. Deluded or not, Waiyaki believes this is the path to recovery of Gikuyu lands.

Ngotho's myth teaches that it was Gikuyu and Mumbi's presence that brought peace and balance to the land; the land will only prosper under Gikuyu rule. When Ngotho explains a prophecy regarding a chosen one who

would take back the ancestral land, his son, Boro, responded: “To hell with the prophecy...How can continue working for a man who has taken your land? How can you go on serving him?”⁵⁶ Without waiting for an answer, Boro storms out. But it may be Boro who perhaps best demonstrates the function of the myth despite its discrepant nature. Boro, who did not heed, nor seemed to believe in such prophecy or myth, kills Mr. Howlands, the proprietor of his ancestral lands. It can be argued that Boro, ironically, attempts to live such a prophecy—a prophecy which exists as an extension to the rights granted by all the voices of the foundational myth, a prophecy meant to fulfill the role of mythology as a point of cultural return; at the same time, Boro can also be configured as reliving the traditional Kenyan Waiyaki.

Conclusion

Using the Makerere novels’ mythology as a point of inference and as a commentary on colonial mythology itself demonstrates that colonial mythology is an element of cultural difference. Colonial myths, recited by the colonized, exist in their specific form only at the time that they are uttered. The myth’s meaning must then be determined by the context of its utterance. The meaning that it may have had in the past doesn’t define its contemporary use. Accordingly, the reception of these invocations is guided by the circumstance of the listener. If we are to be informed by Mali’s explanation of myths “as histories of personal and communal identity” that ultimately “define and defend the national community,” then, myths uttered in a colonial setting should be understood as part of a process of cultural differentiation.⁵⁷ They help inform and shape a national identity in the face of a colonizing Other.

Ngũgĩ’s use of myths also demonstrates that colonial mythology is a polyphonous enterprise, supporting different versions of the same myth. Even though the myths vary considerably, at times contradicting each other, and at other times even offering completely different versions of historical personages, they agree enough to serve their function in promoting nationalist agendas. Such agendas include rediscovering a national history, which, as Franz Fanon claims, “rehabilitate[s] that nation and serves as a justification for the hope of a future national culture.”⁵⁸ This is seen throughout Ngũgĩ’s *River* version of Waiyaki which explores pre-colonial culture. They also include rights to religious freedom, as demonstrated by the circumcision dispute in *The River Between* and rights to equal work and pay, as demonstrated by the strike and rebellions in *Weep Not, Child*. Perhaps most importantly, myths function as calls for the liberation and restoration of native lands: the foundational myth serves as cultural charter which asserts the Gikuyu rights to rule and reap ancestral lands, while the messianic Waiyaki legitimizes national unity and struggle against foreign encroachment to retain land through Christian rhetoric. As Fanon affirms, “for a colonized people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity.”⁵⁹ It is for this reason that myths, as divergent as they may be, constantly make a connection between the material land and the sacred, viewing ancestral lands as divine dispensation for all of posterity.

However, what is the function of a polyphonous colonial mythology? What does the discordance accomplish? Perhaps the function of polyphony resides in its nature as a process of cultural differentiation. Anthony Smith writes that myths and memories are activated as “ethnic profiles and identities are increasingly sought,” making the invocation of myths

elemental to “the constitution of national identities.”⁶⁰ Thus, if myths can be understood as national self-identification, then the utterance of mythology in a colonial setting can be understood as an enunciation - which is also an act of identifying oneself to the Other. In this case, colonial mythology is a polyphonous enunciation, encompassing many voices, diverse interpretations to myths, and even different versions of the myths themselves. Colonial mythology is a resonant, cacophonous identification of selves elicited by colonial hegemony.

Fanon proposes in *Black Skin, White Masks*, that “mastery of language affords remarkable power.”⁶¹ Though Fanon here referred to a colonized person’s knowledge of the colonizer’s language, we may be able to use his statement as a point of departure to fully understand myths as speech. If myth functions as speech, and hence as language; if it is polyphonous in nature, and at times discordant, this would frustrate colonial attempts to master the native myths. In effect, the colonial mythology becomes a vehicle for performing a sort of slippage, eluding the identifying grasp of the Other, curbing the attempts of essentialization of the nation by frustrating the homogenization of the national narratives. Thus, as a polyphonous enterprise, colonial mythology attempts to check stereotyping and denies fixity to the colonizer. Its exercise is a resistance to hegemonic monoculture and the Western notions of nation and nationality. However, we cannot assume that this exercise is frozen in a temporality of colonialism. Peter Hitchcock asserts that “when we use terms like *colonialism*, *nation*, and *postcolonialism* they must bear the weight of a ghostly afterlife in neocolonialism, postnation, and transnationalism.”⁶² Whichever ghostly life that follows colonial Kenya, whether the neocolonial form that Ngũgĩ has spent much ink on, or the increasingly transnational marketplace, mythology—

continuously polyphonous—transcends secular realities and continues to chart paths back to transcendent sovereignty.

Notes

1. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, *Weep Not, Child*, (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1964), 61.
2. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, *The River Between*, (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1965).
3. Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1992), 13.
4. Within fiction these most notably include *Petals of Blood* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1977); *Devil on the Cross* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1980); and *Matigari* (Johannesburg: Heinemann, 1986). Among his many essays dedicated to these topics larger texts include: *Writing against Neo-Colonialism* (Nairobi: Vita Books, 1986); *Barrel of a Pen: Resistance to Repression in Neo-Colonial Kenya* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1983); and *Globaletics: Theory and the Politics of Knowing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).
5. In a 1978 interview by “Weekly Review”, Ngũgĩ stated that Kenyan history has “been distorted by the cultural needs of imperialism”, thus necessitating a variant history; Ngũgĩ, Interview. *Weekly Review* (Nairobi) 9 Jan. 1978. 10
6. “Essentialist” from “essentialism”, in criticism is the idea of reducibility of a people, nation, culture, etc. Referencing a fundamentalist, and hence, often monolithic, understanding of national identity (usually native), essentialism proposes a brute dichotomy between the identity of self and other; self and foreigner; colonized and colonizer. This presupposes that each identity has essential qualities and characteristics, existent previous to colonization, that can be called upon or reverted to. Decolonial and Nationalist theory and rhetoric are often accused of being essentialist. See Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (Chatto & Windus, 1994), 16.; Salman Rushdie “Commonwealth Literature Does not Exist”, in *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991* (Penguin, 1991), 67.
7. Cultural difference is a term coined by Homi Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* (2nd ed., Routledge, 2004). Bhabha explains cultural difference as process of signification where statements about culture are produced and negotiated. Cultural difference occurs at an encounter. In postcolonial criticism, encounter most often refers to encounter between colonizer and colonized; hence the cultural difference is the enunciations of selfhood, otherness, and the “cultural” difference between them. Such a difference could not exist without an enunciation and an enunciation could not exist without an encounter.

8. "Enunciation" is another term by Homi Bhabha found in *The Location of Culture*; it is closely related to "cultural difference". See note 6.
9. Joseph Mali, *Mythistory: The Making of Modern Historiography* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003) 6.
10. Craig Calhoun, "Time, World and Secularism" in *The Post-secular in Question: Religion in our Contemporary Society*, ed. Philip Gorski, David Kyuman Kim, John Torpey and Jonathan Van Antwerpen. (New York: New York University Press, 2012): 340.
11. Ato Sekyi-Otu, "The Refusal of Agency: The Founding Narrative and Waiyaki's Tragedy in 'The River Between,'" *Research in African Literatures* 16, no. 2 (1985): 157-178, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/3819411>.
12. Sekyi-Otu, 'The Refusal of Agency,' 161-2.
13. Apollo O. Amoko, "The Resemblance of Colonial Mimicry: A Revisionary Reading of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's 'The River Between,'" *Research in African Literatures* 36, no.1 (2005): 35, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/3821318>.
14. For comprehensive constellation of the archive, see Godfrey Muriuki, *A history of the Kikuyu, 1500-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974).
15. H.H. Austin "The Passing of Waiyaki," *The Cornhill Magazine*, 1923.
16. This is the Gikuyu version of Waiyaki's encounter with Henry Porter—clearly discordant to H.H. Porter's description.
17. Wambui Waiyaki Otieno, *Mau Mau's Daughter: A Life History* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), 38.
18. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 34-36.
19. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, "The RW Interview: Ngugi wa Thiong'o." *Revolutionary Worker*, December 15, 1986: 8-10.
20. Carol Sicherman, "Ngugi wa Thiong'o and the Writing of Kenyan History," *Research in African Literatures* 20, no.3 (Autumn 1989): 360, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/3819170>.
21. Ngũgĩ, *The River Between*, 38.
22. Ngũgĩ, *The River Between*, 29.
23. Ngũgĩ, *The River Between*, 96; "A house divided" is an allusion to Matthew 12:25.
24. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 86.
25. Govind Narain Sharma, "Ngũgĩ's Christian Vision: Theme and Pattern in *A Grain of Wheat*," *African Literature Today* 10, (1979): 174.
26. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, "An Interview with Ngũgĩ." *The Weekly Review*, January 9, 1978: 10.
27. This identification of (and with) a call to action (in a colonial setting) naturally produces a difference between the colonized nation and the colonizer. The distinction between this and slippage is that in slippage the artifact itself produces the difference; here, with the use of Christian tropes the colonized subject can sincerely identify with the Christianized hero and determined a need for change based on the self-identification.
28. Ngũgĩ, *Weep Not, Child*, 26.
29. Ngũgĩ, *Weep Not, Child*, 26.
30. Mali, *Mythistory*, 4.
31. Gerishon Ngau Mwaura Kirika, "Aspects of the Religion of the Gikuyu of Central Kenya before and After European Contact with Special Reference to Prayer and Sacrifice" (PhD diss., University of Aberdeen, 1988) 81-82, http://digitool.abdn.ac.uk/R?func=search-advanced-go&find_code1=WSN&request1=AAIU019781
32. Ngũgĩ, *The River Between*, 2.
33. Ngũgĩ, *The River Between*, 17.
34. Sekyi-Otu, 'The Refusal of Agency,' 162.
35. Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, (New York: Grove Press, 2005): 209.
36. Simon Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 15.
37. Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o*, 17.
38. Ngũgĩ, *Weep Not, Child*, 61.
39. Ngũgĩ, *Weep Not, Child*, 24.
40. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *The River Between*, 2.
41. Ato Sekyi-Otu, 'The Refusal of Agency' 162.
42. Ngũgĩ, *The River Between*, 17.
43. Ngũgĩ, *The River Between*, 18.
44. Ngũgĩ, *The River Between*, 7.
45. Ngũgĩ, *The River Between*, 15.
46. Ngũgĩ, *The River Between*, 18.
47. Ngũgĩ, *The River Between*, 2.
48. Sekyi-Otu, 'The Refusal of Agency,' 162.
49. Ngũgĩ, *Weep Not, Child*, 24.
50. Ngũgĩ, *Weep Not, Child*, 23.
51. Ngũgĩ, *Weep Not, Child*, 107-8.
52. Ngũgĩ, *Weep Not, Child*, 24.
53. Ngũgĩ, *Weep Not, Child*, 25-6.
54. Hybrid in the sense of being an agent/product of "Cultural Hybridity" as introduced by Bhabha. For Bhabha, "cultural Hybridity is all that may emanate within the interstices of fixed identities, or rather the cultural production from contradictory subjectivities. Hybridity shirks the apparent differences and rejects any assumed hierarchy between them, opening a space for new culture, new subjects. A Long history of people and culture in movement assumes that all cultures are "hybrid", and thus, any cultural essentialism is unreasonable.
55. Ngũgĩ, *Weep Not, Child*, 57.
56. Ngũgĩ, *Weep Not, Child*, 26.
57. Mali, *Mythistory*, xii.
58. Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. (New York: Grove Press, 2005) 210.
59. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 42.
60. Anthony D. Smith, "The Myth of the 'Modern Nation' and the Myths of Nations," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 11:1, 1-26 (1988): 12.

61. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, (London: Pluto Press, 2008) 9.
62. Peter Hitchcock, *The Long Space: Transnationalism and Postcolonial Form*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010): 186.

