

The Literary Anthropology and the Bibliography Frame for Keynan Writer Ngugi Wa Thiong'o

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ABSTRACT	ARTICLE DETAILS
The term corpus in “The Literary Anthropology and the Bibliography Frame for Keynan Writer Ngugi wa Thiong’o” has two signs: the Africanist sign and the teaching sign. The teaching sign is studied in the bibliography frame of essays by Ngugi wa Thiong’o and that the anthropology is entirely seen through the angle of <i>The Invention of Africa</i> by Y.V. Mudimbe. The literary anthropology wants to take full ownership of this practical literature. KEYWORDS: hypothesis (freedom), problem (syllabuses), justification (tradition), theory (materialism), outline (essay), result (essential).	PublishedOn: 29 October 2025 Available on: https://irijsh.com/

INTRODUCTION

The subject of literary anthropology must be clarified right away in the slot of scholars and the works of scholarship¹. Writing an academic text has some requirements related to the justification of the subject, the hypothesis of the analysis, the problematic, the theoretical tool, the outline of the subject under review, and the research outcome, which are routine matters for my current grade as a senior lecturer. Here are the key words for the current literary scientific routine: hypothesis (freedom), problem (syllabuses), justification (tradition), theory (materialism), outline (essay), result (essential).

The hypothesis backs up three essays² of Ngugi to withdraw from the essayist freedom of writing some academic lectures' questions. The problem of the syllabuses and curricula in the African literature departments is that the lectures about fiction and theatre are still being hold as if these forms are foreign to Africa. There ought to be no dispute before the justification that will be given to Ngugi's attitude. He is a pioneer writer who spreads/diffuses in his works and in his lectures the western tradition of teaching that he studied himself and the norms of African traditional ways of training. The literary anthropology is a tool. But this analysis requires the literary theory that shows the contributor's special field. Thus, the cultural materialism will be used to study Ngugi's three essays that read: *Homecoming* (Essay 1); *Decolonising the Mind* (Essay 2) and *Moving the Centre, The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms*, Heinemann, 1993 (Essay 3). The parts therefore expected for the outline and their content will result in a plea for instituting the essential names of African writers for African literature in the academic lectures.

Let us think of the literary anthropology in terms of the relationship between the relevance of an author and his own presence in what he is talking about. The example of Ngugi empowers us to express things in a more elaborate way. Ngugi is a university academic/faculty. He is acclaimed and pioneer writer of African literature. Therefore, the notion of corpus, from which the theoretical choice will be understood, goes beyond the list of mere books covered by the literary anthropology we are studying as the subject. Ngugi³ bears both the sign of the Africanist corpus and the sign of the teaching corpus through his works and his academic teachings of the English language. The author Ngugi is a proponent of these two corpora in our analysis. And these two

¹ Scholars and works of scholarship see Ngugi's 'The Role of the Scholars in the Development of African Literatures' in *Moving the Center, The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms*, Heinemann, 1993, p. 82.

² Ngugi, Wa Thiong'o, *Homecoming*. London, Heinemann, 1972 (Essay 1) ; *Decolonising the Mind, The Politics of Language in African Literature*, James Currey Ltd / Heinemann, 2011 (Essay 2) ; *Moving the Centre* (Essay 3)

³ Ngugi's position as a lecturer-researcher is at stake.

signs make it possible to identify the cultural materialism as the appropriate theory to this work. The corpus of Africanism is entirely reserved for Mudimbe⁴.

1- THE AFRICANIST CORPUS

The freedom of essay as a writing genre does not undergo the condition of limitation in writing fiction. About that freedom and that limitation, Ngugi wrote in the Author's Note of *Homecoming* (xv) this: "In the essay the writer can be more direct, didactic, polemical, or he can merely state his beliefs and faith (...) the boundaries of his imagination are limited by the writer's beliefs, interests, and experiences in life, by where in fact he stands in the world of relations (...) readers are curious about a writer's opinion on almost everything (...) from politics and religion to conservation of wild life ! The writer is thus forced, either by the public or by the needs of his craft to define his beliefs, attitudes and outlook in the more argumentative form of the essay⁵."

Africanism allows the accumulation of three functions: the monumentalist, the archaeologist, and the poststructuralist. These functions of the arts are very distinctly identified in the teaching of art. The material of the object of arts is studied through fieldwork. The subject art is the classroom course teaching.

The only play, *The Black Hermit*⁶, and the four essays by these African writers have been selected. We find a figure in Ngugi's design of the essay *Homecoming*. That figure is the world of the art of fiction in the essayistic enterprise of object of arts. There is a difference linked to this point on which the figure of Ngugi is propped. His starting point there is different from that of the other essays. The study of his essays that we have chosen is not dictated by his play-fiction. However, literary anthropology sees itself here in the same position as *Homecoming* since the British teachings he received will dictate the essential role of Ngugi. The essential place also suits the writer from Africa in the teaching of African literature. Do African institutions rely on institutions outside Africa to inscribe those African writers' names on the curricula of the study of literary disciplines? Other non-African institutions can study them. But I feel that the tradition of studying literary works of writers like Ngugi should be part of the study of the academic programme of African literature. Some African writers are essentials for the study of African literature like those "writers who set at work the creative necessity of writing about Africa and thereby did for this African continent "what...Shakespeare...did for English...What ...Goethe ...did for ...German (Ngugi, *Moving the Center*, p. 22)

Works of fiction posts a pronouncement like almost this one: "Any resemblance to actual events, locations, persons are entirely coincidental and fictional products of the author's imagination is used fictitiously". This type of disclaimer cannot work for a work of essay. This disclaimer found at the front of most novels stave off laws, juridical implication that the text may open in the course of writing a novel like text. This will conduct instead the thought of literary anthropology in which we perceive the physical presence of the author, that is to say, the critic takes the title of investigator, as it is proper to the anthropologist without usurping it. We are faced with an Africanist corpus of which Mudimbe alone holds the key to the problems. Does the Mudimbe essay, which provides the key to the problem, impose a monumentalist, archaeological, or poststructuralist character on the study of the other works? Mudimbe therefore has the right to speak here: "I am proposing to formulate it through a critical synthesis of Foucault's thesis on the last archaeological rupture in Western epistemology, a brief interpretation of Lévi-Strauss's notion of *savage mind* (italics not mine), and finally a plea for the importance of the subject in the social sciences (...) These philosophical questions of method should, I hope, affirm the usefulness of both an epistemological analysis and a critical understanding of Africanism." The subject is reviewed in the social sciences to understand Africanism in favor of peoples classified as uncivilized. If we were to measure the word civilization, we would see that it would be as vast as the word imperialism for which Ngugi has a program in the third essay. The word civilization has such a huge content that one part is called tradition, another part takes the name culture in addition to its linguistic part. These 'spare parts' do not really function separately, even if their uniqueness is recognized in cheap and easily accessible documents in Africa. Let us say that the terms civilization, tradition and culture belong more to the historical sphere than to the linguistic one and the literary field which arises from the term language. The theory that studies culture in the sense of both art and art objects is called cultural materialism, which the British critic Graham Holderness describes as the politicized form of historiography.

This question will show the elements to be established for the study of African fiction in the same way as a British novel. We can take song, dance and music as examples. In *Decolonizing the Mind*, Ngugi gives a genuine academic course on song and dance in his own writing. The course of the Africanist corpus is relayed in the course of the teaching corpus by a 'literalized report' an expression that characterizes the thought about literary anthropology. It is the counter-effectuation of the effectuation⁷. The essential fabric is in a special neatness of the description of the analysis and the discourse under the form of a course schedule concerning

⁴ Mudimbe's position as a lecturer-researcher is not at stake in the study of his *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge*, Indiana University Press, 1988.

⁵ Ngugi, *Homecoming*, Author's Note, p. xv.

⁶ Wa Thiong'o Ngugi, *The Black Hermit*, Nairobi, London Heinemann Educational Books, 1968.

⁷ Estelle Jacoby, *Penser la danse avec Deleuze*, Littérature No. 128, Biographiques (Décembre E 2002), pp. 93-103, Armand Colin, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41704890>. [Accès Juillet 2020].

the classroom 'course grounds'⁸. Those courses include lectures on *The Black Hermit*. Ngugi knows his schedule while the schedule about the course grounds are elements of a teaching to be allowed by any institution that agrees with the problem of the syllabuses and curricula in the African literature departments still being holding lectures about fiction and theatre as if these forms are foreign to Africa.

2 AFRICANISM WOVEN INTO THE TEACHING CORPUS

The culture of the literalized reportage⁹ of literary anthropology contains two presents in what is meant by attitude for Ngugi, and which render this attitude a situation with a unique reek. The present of the teaching of those course grounds is to be carried out on the academic field like Ngugi. The present of the writer is the effectuation and the author of the present text will be on the terrain of the counter-effectuation at a moment's notice course. The culture of the literalized reportage of the literary anthropology consists in this work of teaching 'a course at a moment's notice in the *déjà vu* teaching way of Ngugi. The *déjà vu* of the works of fiction puts emphasis on the academic fields aspect by the own introductory words of Ngugi about *Decolonizing the Mind*: "This book is a summary of some of the issues on which I have passionately involved for the last twenty years of my practice in fiction, theatre, criticism and in teaching literature. For those who have read my books *Homecoming*, *Writers in Politics*, *Barrel of a Pen*, and even *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary* there may be a feeling of *déjà vu*. Such a reaction will not be far from the truth. But the lectures on which this book is based have given me the chance to pull together in a connected and a coherent form the main issues on the language question in literature which I have touched here and there in my previous works¹⁰". To get ready for any moment notice work, to see 'al-ready', are feeling signs of cultural dynamism.

Cultural dynamism¹¹ is proof that selfishness is not an innate act. And it is in the field of sculpture that Ngugi provided an example that is relevant to the question of object of arts, following the same reasoning that Mudimbe holds: « African sculpture has decisively influenced that of Europe : a collection of African art will be found in the major museums of the world. We know also that jazz, with its now wide influence on modern music, is derived from African rhythms and musical art-forms¹². »

Some iconic works should not be classified as obsolete '*déjà vu*'. Regarding the essay type and the '*déjà vu*' of cultural materialism in this slot of the literary anthropology, our opinion is that iconic texts are meticulous enough to support a national requirement for the study of their authors in all schools and universities, by all pupils and students. This is a plea for cultural materialism. An iconic text that presents cultural benefits deserves recognition. In the French language, the word 'reconnaissance' (recognition) cannot be written without the word 'connaissance' (knowledge) and recognition exists through the material of knowledge. The last point of the theory arises from the question of the teaching material and Africanism: Is the material the object when it comes to literary anthropology? The answer is yes, given the '*déjà vu*'. A large body of knowledge about Africa is the actual target material. Our new venture on art and object of arts provides insight into this issue.

In *The Idea of Africa*¹³, we also see Mudimbe's pronouncement on the '*déjà vu*' through his definition of African art to be perceived in the verb '*reprendre*'. It should be noticed that both used respectively the French in their English texts. Here, the Ngugi's French '*déjà vu*'¹⁴ means the Mudimbe's French '*reprendre*' : "I intend as an image of the contemporary activity of African art. I mean it **first** in the sense of taking up an interrupted tradition, not out of a desire for purity, which would testify only to the imaginations of dead ancestors, but in a way that reflects the conditions of today. **Second**, *reprendre*, suggests a methodical assessment, the artist's labor beginning, in effect, with an evaluation of the tools, means, and projects of art within a social context transformed by colonialism and by later currents, influences, and fashions from abroad. **Finally**, *reprendre* implies a pause, a meditation, a query on the meaning of the two preceding exercises. If, however, an African artist does go through these critical phases, consciously or unconsciously, in the creation of art, viewers of the finished work, even some of the most attentive ones, may find themselves looking for traces, for strata and symbols, that might qualify the piece as part of such-and-such a trend in the vague domain of "primitive art."¹⁵

The interest in these three levels of '*reprendre* (resuming)' lies in their idea of the material support. More interestingly, what is supported is what cultural materialism in Raymond Williams sense is called 'sentiment of structure', that is, of values lived and felt in the imagination and in reality. African art is in a traditional material form, it is a material tool, material means, material projects. The means of the hypothesis of our analysis are given. It is about the undertaking of the object of arts of Mudimbe in Ngugi literary

⁸ Course Grounds : they are a series of lecture by the author of the current text. They illustrate the counter-effectuation of Ngugi.

⁹ Reportage : a term for TV and newspaper journalists used in a proper way in literature to 'describe-write' news, a way that helps see the literary anthropology as a practical instrument. A journalist is a fieldworker man. One must not see literary anthropology as just a theoretical instrument.

¹⁰ Ngugi, *Decolonising The Mind*, p.

¹¹ Ngugi, *Homecoming*, Towards a National Culture, p. 4-21

¹² Ngugi, *Homecoming*, p. 4.

¹³ V.Y. Mudimbe, *The Idea of Africa*, Indiana University Press, 1994, p. 154.

¹⁴ Ngugi's book is written in English and term is in French.

¹⁵ Mudimbe V.Y., *The Idea of Africa*, Indiana University Press, 1994, p. 154.

art. The problem defines the word anthropology and the word literary by the key to the problem of Mudimbe: How did the configurations of the same knowledge lead the African subject to be absent? The African man was present in the episteme of knowledge in the classical age. Where did the African man go in the episteme of the end of the 18th century? In a very close way, this key to the problem of Mudimbe appears in the reduction of models in Ngugi: How did the African tribes come to be absent? « Yet a cursory glance around would show there are no tribes in Africa (...) 'Tribe' is a special creation of the colonial regime. Now there are only two tribes left in Africa: the 'haves' and the 'have nots'. What goes for tribalism in Africa is really a form of civil war among the 'haves', struggling for the crumbs from the masters' tables (...) they are the owners of (...) all the moving levers of the economy (*Homecoming*, xvii) ». Finally, Mudimbe's key to the problem lies in Ngugi's theatrical work: How did the British colonial administration cause the village subject to be absent from theatrical activity? African plays have always presented identifiable forms since ancient times.

How, for example, can we define anthropology without those produced by this problematic, without passing over in silence the primitive meaning of the word anthropology? We must refer to Bronislaw Malinowski, whom Mudimbe quoted: "Anthropology, which used to be the study of beings and things retarded, gradual, and backward, is now faced with the difficult task of recording how the 'savage' becomes an active participant in modern civilization"¹⁶.

The selection of book titles is the subject of heated debate in African universities when certain curricula models are approved, and the teaching of certain subjects inevitably fuels misunderstandings of 'proprietaryness' nature. The analysis sparked interest in the suggestion for a course subject for the assessment of an associate professor before he becomes a full professor and the proposal for book titles in the programme of an academic institution. A tutelary stamp on a subject may be allowed for such a faculty, which will be withdrawn when he retired unless otherwise stated by the institution. A proposal is made for some 'never-to-be-withdrawn' book titles' for teaching African literature.

To meet the students' need in culture, tradition and civilization in a very specific way, it is necessary to recognize the other meaning of the word faculty as being first and foremost a place for a group of specialties and sub-specialties within an academic institution. This is why it would be appropriate to announce an annual program of libraries and art museums for our students in line with the objective of the training policy in general knowledge. The concept of university *per se* conveys the meaning of general knowledge in the functioning of those groups and sub-groups named faculties. Thus, 'the faculty' is used to say the capacity, 'the faculty' says a certain franchise of the borders' of the university under presidential regime, and the faculty says the freedom to be in *presentia* in the other moments of the training when an amphitheater room is filled by the plethora of numbers of the students. The faculty stands for the optional in the choice of certain subjects as second credit.

An opportunity to address the question of the approval of the tradition of the essential writers and their books of African literature lies here as well. All junior lecturers in the English department arrogate to themselves the right to give a tutorial course of British literature only to first-year students. This is also recommended for language courses. In principle, all senior lecturers also have authority over the courses of British literature without disturbing specialists of the same rank in an English department. Ngugi addressed these issues in *Homecoming* and these facts are supported by the chosen theory of cultural materialism. The value and reputation of certain African authors, certain iconic texts should no longer be shadowed.

CONCLUSION

The rationale began with the questions of the signs of the corpus through the writer Ngugi, which showed the adequacy of the choice of the theory of cultural materialism. The hypothesis was installed there and we defined art and anthropology. The articulations of the analysis are: the gnosis and the diagnosis of Mudimbe on anthropology, and the essential writer of Africa named Ngugi. Both have occupied a few paragraphs for each part corpus. At the end of this rationale, the results underlines a debate of the academic programme.

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