

# ERASURE AND THE CENTRALITY OF LITERATURES IN AFRICAN LANGUAGES

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## Unconventional Abstract

Let me start by narrating two incidents that I think reveal the nature of the complex problem Africa is facing today in the area of literary production and consumption. In October 1980 I was invited to attend the African Writers Symposium in Frankfurt during the International Book Fair. It was at this Symposium that Miriam Bâ received the Norma Award for her novel *Not so long a Letter*. The big names in African Literature were there. It was during one of the breakfast times when one of the African writers writing in English turned to me and asked, 'Are you also one of the African writers?' I said, "Yes". "In which language do you write?" 'I write in Swahili. I replied'. He looked at me, and in a voice bordering a chuckle said, 'then why are you here?' This was a puzzle. Why was I there?

The second episode happened in 1990 in Tanzania where I have always thought I should be. After the publication of my short novel *Nagona*, I gave one of my six copies to a friend to read and give me his comments. After two days he brought it back and said as he tossed it in his hand, "this is a very good novel probably your best so far, but why didn't you write it in English?" This was a second puzzle. The multiple implications of these two episodes are many and I would not like to pre-empt them through authorial intrusion. But it all boils down to one thing – the question of erasure. It is this question that I would like to discuss in this article, be it in a language that may raise a third puzzle for I have several times been asked why I sometimes write about African languages in a foreign language.

### 1.0 Voices of Speaking Subjects

The word 'voice' is a household word in literary discourse. It is often used with reference to the marginalised, exploited and oppressed members of society, to cultural pluralism and class antagonism. Philosophically it is identified as conscience since it is closest to the self. Textually it is used with reference to point of view and intertextuality. Most of us (intellectuals) are used to voices of writers writing in foreign languages. The creators of what I call a literature of gossip – gossiping to the 'other' about the people for whom and on whom their works are supposedly written; a literature that dances in the peripheral corridors of western discourse; a literature that seems to have sacrificed African being for the pursuit of the universal. Mine is a simple voice of a writer writing in an African language. It is one of the voices of the creators of a literature I would call a literature of the speaking subjects, not of "Calibans." A "caliban" writer having been taught language struggles to answer back to the colonizer, the oppressor and addresses the elite leaving the majority to exist in a state of erasure. Let me take some time here to explain what I mean by erasure in the context of this article. Let us take the example of CNN World News. Africa rarely features in the news.

Africa in this context exists in erasure. But when an American Embassy is bombed, Africa suddenly exists. Erasure means existing in non-existence. African writers writing in African languages exist in erasure. They only emerge into sight when budding scholars look for topics to write on for their dissertations, and when their texts are studied abroad they are mainly used as texts for language proficiency.

As Gibbons *et al.* (1994:4) have observed 'knowledge is always produced under an aspect of continuous negotiation and it will not be produced unless and until the interests of the various actors are included'. In the literature of the "Calibans" interests of various actors are there but it is the important element of continuous negotiation that makes it wanting. The literature of the speaking subjects is more interested in direct dialogue with the people. The literature of the speaking subjects is assertive. It says 'we are.' The fact that we are there is what irritates and challenges the oppressor. Language is the first and foremost assertion of being, likewise the literature created in it. In this type of literature the people exist in a "presencing" to whom unconcealed truth is set to work.

## 2.0 Counter-hegemonic Discourse

Paradoxically, an African literature written in a European language is likely to be a more accurate barometer of fluctuations in national circumstances and mood than a literature written in an African language. One of the ironies of multilingualism in Africa is that the extraordinary number and variety of languages in most sub-Saharan nations make communication across ethnic and international boundaries difficult in anything but a colonial language (Lindfors, 1997:135).

With quotations from Achebe and Senghor, Lindfors pushes this argument further. The main central issue is the idea that a literature written in a European language is more mature than a literature written in an African language. The reason often given is that there are certain ideas and concepts which African languages cannot handle. The problem of communication is often the trench behind which shells are directed toward literatures in African languages. Let us pose for a moment and ask ourselves, "How was the outcry for the liberation of Southern Africa communicated across Botswana, Zimbabwe, Angola, Mozambique, Tanzania, Libya, and Cuba etc.?" Counter-hegemonic discourse is above the simple idea of communicating in European Languages. Some, if not the majority, of the liberation fighters could not even speak them properly. And do we need to evoke Derrida about the dangers of simplifying the concept of "writing" with reference to oral literature? Finally I do not think that we should place the destiny of the people in the vagaries of foreign languages whose axis operandi is not in the vicinity of our being. At one time in the history of African

written literature African writers thought that foreign languages were languages of the “gods” and the only way to make them listen was to write in the foreign languages which they understood. They therefore, in order to be heard and understood, decided to write in foreign languages pushing aside the oppressive otherness contained in them. They were wrong at that time and they are still wrong at this time. The “gods” have throughout imperial history been mad. With the intensification of global exploitation they are now raging and stampeding dangerously with sharpened knives in their hands. The only language they have always understood is counter-hegemonic discourse that has always stood in their “path” and they in their madness have often knocked their “selves” against it. This solid block is the fact that we are there as speaking subjects not as Calibans. This is what was affirmed when we reclaimed our land and demanded for independence. Counter-hegemonic discourse is rooted in the intangible power of African languages that is inseparable from our being.

Literature deals with understanding what we are, our “quiddity”(our whatness) and shows us to the rest of the world so that the world may see what we are. In literature we do not simply express ourselves but rather we reveal ourselves. It is my view that the best language to use is the one closest to us ontologically. This means that literature is first and foremost an ontological project in which human beings are seen moulded by society and social relations as they make history.

African literature written in foreign languages is an epistemological project that deals with explanation than revealing, hence the excessive descriptive “anthropologism” in some of these works. A good number of them are repetitions in gossip of what we know with a low level of defamiliarisation. African literature in African languages is also of what we know but the very use of an African language forces the creative writer to put more effort in “making strange.” Languages of being deal primarily with understanding, (understanding concepts); while languages of expression are more inclined to systematic knowledge and analysis. Valuable creativity is one which is able to change concepts and perceptions of people not simply to mirror life. It is for this reason that I propose that we privilege understanding and the languages which go along with it without hindering epistemological programs and the languages which go along with it. As de Bono (1993:57) has noted, “it is perception that gives us the words and the choice with which we think about anything.” Creativity understood in this way is the main hope that can restore thinking and making Africa a competitor to the rest of the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

At this juncture let me mention one perplexing phenomenon. I will give the example of African literature written in English. This literature has been appropriated as part of the commonwealth knowing very well that what is

common is the language but not the wealth. The appropriated literature has been given a secondary status. The Overseas Cambridge Examination for form four students testified this. Section one which was on Shakespeare and other English writers was compulsory. Other literatures written in English were secondary. The teaching of African literature in Universities is also problematic. In some African Universities literature written in English is taught (and may be rightly so) in Departments of English and not in Departments of African Languages and Literature. Sometimes the literature is taught as secondary texts to communication skills in English. The idea of communication skills has been reduced to communication in English or other foreign languages which are thought to be the gate ways to knowledge. African languages seem to require no skills.

While literatures in foreign languages were, and still are, struggling to find a space in the corridors of Western discourse, literatures in African languages have always been negotiating the path of history with the people. The "subaltern" as Spivak (1988) notes, has always spoken. Spivak (1999) gives the following warning:

The phrase "sustainable development" has entered the discourse

Of all the bodies that manage globality. Development to sustain what? The general ideology of global development is racist paternalistic (and alas increasingly sororalism); its general economics capital-intensive investment its broad politics the silencing of resistance and the subaltern as the rhetoric of their protest is constantly appropriated (1999: 372-373).

It is this constant appropriation by imperial cultures that writing in African languages tries to avoid by founding a centre on which it can rotate and push the wheel of development.

Kiswahili literature for instance has been a counter-hegemonic discourse in written form since the seventeenth century. The history of literatures in African languages has constantly been one of resistance to economic and cultural imperialism as evidenced by the works of Shaaban Robert, Penina Mlamba, Ibrahim Hussein, Said Ahmed in Kiswahili Literature; Monyaise in Setswana, Mutswairo and Mungoshi in Shona, Mofolo in Sesotho etc. It is also evidenced by silences and textual innuendos which resisted and continue to resist codification and de-codification. Many songs, traditional and contemporary have remained underground un-deciphered by ideological state apparatuses, resisting appropriation and obliteration. This subversive resistance is guided by writers and artists as organic intellectuals of the people; thus allowing the masses to

driving Africans crazy and it has inculcated into the minds of the youth the idea that foreign languages are synonymous to a new emergent culture that is theirs. This trend is an attempt to push all discourse in African languages to the periphery. If this trend is not checked there will no longer be "la luta continua" but a war re-started, the worst of it will be a war lost. The now prevailing argument that foreign languages are no longer "foreign" but "ours" is the first step to losing this war.

The second point concerns boundaries of national identity ascribed to the existence of a national language in multicultural states. The advantages of boundaries drawn by national languages and ideologies that accompany them are many. National languages act as a protective shell against imperial culture. Languages within the circle of dominance of a national language receive less impact from the daily bombardment of cultural imperialism. My worry is that national languages and the literature created in them suffocate other "minority" languages and their literatures. The situation is worse in nation states where national languages are spoken as first languages by a minority as is the case in Malawi. Here I must quickly say that Tanzania and Kenya are exceptions due the historical "accident" or "fallacy" which stripped Swahili of its "ethnic" identity for purposes of easy appropriation and smooth creation of national identities. Ngugi wa Thiong'o's stand on these languages is clear, and he has shown an unquestionable example that it is possible to write, publish and have a reasonable market in these languages.

I am bringing these two points into focus because questions of globalization, democratic transparency and free market open doors seem to push for liberalization in all spheres of human life. We know that language is at the centre of human understanding and knowing. It is unfair not to let people think and be creative in their own languages at the expense of national unity and identity. Wa Thiong'o (1993) has suggested that a space should be created for all languages to bloom. Allowing these languages to bloom means creating equal opportunities for people who speak them; it entails using them as languages of instruction from primary school if possible to tertiary education. National languages will have to loosen their tight knots in some areas to let nations move with all their limbs free.

These are questions that will come up and may be more forcefully in this new millennium. But as we stand at the moment I am of the opinion that literatures created in African languages both written and "unwritten" are forms of resistance to imperial discourse and have protected us as human beings from erasure. I must add however that through these literatures we have artistically articulated symbols of power and solidarity to an extent that we are not easy prey to cultural imperialism and the technological current caused by the flood of global

capitalism. The possibility of dreaming together is still there. I hope that “politics” will make these dreams realizable.

### **3.0 On Theory: The bright and Dark Sides of Postcoloniality**

Childs and Williams (1997:218) in their scholarly introduction to Post-Colonial Theory observe that “Post-colonial cultures are characterised by a decentring movement, a subversion of universals and unities, and a diversity and hybridity that permeate their past and condition their present.” They also point out that the main topics discussed by the theory are: “syncretism, displacement, difference, marginality, discourse, alterity, and representation”. They insist that postcoloniality is a strategic phase not a doctrine.

Postcoloniality has for some time been one of the most fashionable theories that “Third World” critics and first world liberal thinkers have found recourse to after the end of the Cold-war. As San Juan (1998) has elaborated, Postcolonial discourse deals with questions of knowledge, power and value. San Juan continues to isolate some of the basic ones, mainly: identity, individuality, temporality, structural transformation in history, ethics, body, desire and several others. San Juan points out that the main factors that have brought about these questions to the foreground are: change in power alignment of nation-states caused by the end of the Cold-war, terrorism and the prioritization of human rights by the international community.

San Juan notes:

With the dissolution of an alternative to predatory capitalism in the form of state/bureaucratic “socialism” in the Soviet Union and its satellites, there is an assumption that the planet has now suddenly become empty, free, and open to improvisations of all sorts (1998: 1-2).

The idea that world resources are now up for grabs has rendered “Third World” economies vulnerable to petty investors. As it can be observed from San Juan’s exposition most of the themes in postcolonial discourse raise questions that have been discussed under the postmodernist project. From the African angle the theme of identity has been discussed almost exhaustively by the proponents of Negritude, by Franz Fanon and a number of African philosophers. Postcolonial discourse may therefore be seen as a re-reading and a reinterpretation of these discourses in the light of the three factors given by San Juan.

The good thing about the theory is that it has attempted to unite the exploited world and speak up as one articulate voice, a voice going beyond the divides of colour, geographical boundaries and the centre/margin dichotomy.

Postcoloniality has done so in a scholarly jargon that seems to have fulfilled the demands of critical decorum labelled "post" and accepted by what San Juan calls "First World" academies. The proposed objectives of moving the world to think beyond myths of cultural purity and authenticity and beyond the prison house of tradition are timely, though a bit too early for African countries. The idea of breaking the centre/margin dichotomy has revitalised Ngugi wa Thiong'o's decolonization project (wa Thiong'o, 1993). The dark side of postcolonial theory is that it has propagated sufficiently the historical side of Senghor, Fanon etc but has left the material side of Rodney (1982) undeveloped. As a result postcolonial theory in the African context is limping. Another aim of this article is to add at least one tenth of a centimetre to this short leg.

Postcolonial theory has partly been caught up by the ruses of capitalist manipulations in the globalization process of free market economy. Because of the idea of liberalization, the theory has become part of the liberalization itself and is now a refuge of liberal democratic thinkers, especially in countries where multiculturalism is a political agenda. It is partly for this reason that the concept of hybridity is topical in Australia, Canada, South Africa and The United States of America. It accommodates even those who dare not raise a finger against any form of exploitation. It has an enclave in which oppressors can cry foul without changing position or outlook. The dark side of hybridity is in its inherent indifference to the negotiation of cultural signs between economically unequal cultural groups.

Along with this concept of hybridity is the notion of the floating signifier propagated by Bhabha (1994). This, as San Juan has noted, is Bhabha's appropriation of Lacan's psychoanalytic view. Bhabha uses this concept to support his argument that hybridity seeks to go beyond the purity of culture and the sedimentation of tradition. The argument that the signifier floats between itself and the signified but without ever connecting with the signified may be plausible in the context of people in the Diaspora and in the production of meaning, but its contradictory subtext is that it also denies meaning to the people the theory seeks to speak for. Human beings have goals that are set and reached. When these goals are reached other goals are set. It is this chain of related goals that makes us different from animals. The concept of the floating signifier in this case is a romantic idea. Keats had it well explained in his 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' – that pending kiss that never reaches its goal. Although not all goals are attained human beings set goals to be reached, not left pending forever.

Because of its lack of economic and political vision in some of its arguments, the theory now seems to be divided into two overlapping camps: The liberal democratic thinkers on the one hand and critics of Marxist orientation on the other. The latter think that postcoloniality is not radical enough to effect

change because it has turned a blind eye to basic issues affecting humanity today. The valorization of capitalist exploitation and the intensified class antagonism that is to follow cannot escape the mind of a keen intellectual who is aware of the fate of the masses in the "Third World". The drive by transnational corporations to control the economies of the world, their resources and ideas cannot be subsumed by hybridity.

As critics and writers in African languages what are we to make of this theory? Our point of departure with early proponents of postcoloniality is not the same when it comes to literary production. Postcoloniality's point of departure already peripherizes literatures written in African languages (Barber, 1995) by privileging the Caliban metaphor. Their discourses hardly mention works written in these languages. This privileging is accompanied by long debates on decentering foreign languages. On our part, as already pointed out, the colonialist never taught us language. We have always been speaking subjects. Secondly in our daily lives our languages have never been removed from the centre. Postcoloniality finds its departure in the narrow path of the educated few. Wa Thiong'o (2009:70) in his treatise on memory reminds us emphatically:

African languages and literature are not dead, have never died; it's just that the house they built was taken over by European languages, which act as though the African languages are corpses that will never rise from the dead to claim their house.

The first house to reclaim is the house of identity. The point of departure for people in the villages is the identity of their children in interethnic marriages, followed by the urban/village dilemma and then by the school at which stage the concept of Europeanization comes in. At the first level the complaint of the clan is that the child is not a "Zulu" since he/she has developed Tswana-like behaviour. It is the level of derogation, slander and sometimes hatred. At the second level the complaint is that the child has become a "town person", and at the third level the child has become a "Mzungu" or Lekgowa (Whiteman). The question of hybridity follows the same paradigm. This is why the concept of hybridity as introduced by postcoloniality becomes narrow when colonialism is taken as a point of reference and departure. It is for this reason that hybridity is sometimes defined as "the integration of (or mingling) of cultural signs and practices from the colonizing and the colonized cultures" (Lyre, 1998). In Africa the shifting of signs has been going on for ages because of intercultural social relations. Hybridity as Lyre (1998:3) observes "is also a useful concept for helping to break down the false sense that colonised cultures – or colonizing cultures for that matter – are monolithic, or have essential unchanging features." The advantages of cross – fertilization of cultures are often taken for granted and the hegemonic oppressiveness of the greater power is most times overlooked. This oppressive



power is not only oppressive but also prescribes the ideological direction which society is to follow. At the level of knowing hybridity seems plausible, but at the level of understanding it raises opaque questions when it tries to play down the horizon of understanding.

I am not trying to belittle the impact of imperialism on our people. I am aware of the destruction it has done on the personality of the ordinary person. Certainly it has influenced all spheres of our lives. But the point I am making is that it is always better to start from the people and move above rather than the other way round. The main aim of literatures created in African languages is to create a dialogue with the people so that they are able to participate fully in decisions which affect their lives. "Think globally, act locally" (San Juan, 1998:169) seems to be the right slogan that captures the universal/local problematic.

#### **4.0 Demythologizing the Complexity of Form: Recasting Intertextuality**

Chinweizu *et al.* (1983) in their controversial book discuss at length the problem of form in African works written in foreign languages. The group is often blamed for their style of discourse. The apologetic and to some non-apologetic stance that they took was also disturbing to African literary scholars. But their point that African writers had to make a deliberate attempt to liberate African literature from imperial hegemony in both content and form was valid. At that time the influence of western literature in some works was certainly great and even embarrassing. Their suggestion that African writers should look back and admire the greatness of form contained in oral traditions was also valid. Indeed some African writers had already taken this course.

While African writers writing in foreign languages were making experiments and contemplating on this, literatures in African languages were already several steps ahead. Intertextuality was a general phenomenon especially in epic poetry and ritual performances. Even in other genres that developed later, experiments done by Swahili writers, especially in drama, were more effective than those writing in English. Writers writing in African languages have always had the advantage of immediacy. People identify very easily with what they see on the stage, and with what they read in novels and poems without relying on imagerial transfer. What form are we to expect in the literatures written in African languages in this millennium? In the new millennium we need not recast oral traditions in the manner Amos Tutuola and Okot p'Bitek did. That was a contribution well done at that time, although I think they did not succeed very well in capturing the subtlety of its form. What we need to do in future is to recast intertextuality itself. Here intertextually refers to the interface and elasticity

of oral traditions to move from oral to written, written to oral; from one genre to another and from one discipline to another and back.

It is intertextuality that creates the possibility of dialogue between disciplines, dialogue between genres and dialogue between the split - self, that is between the ego, id and superego without losing the horizon of understanding and the pivot of African being embedded in language, and of course without forgetting to prioritize the concerns of the masses. In this new millennium we need a form that is able to reveal truth in a subtle way and in an art that revitalizes the past and present and points to the future. This type of form is to be found in myth. Myth is the highest metaphor of life and the source of great literary works.

### 5.0 Unconventional Conclusion

It was some sort of globalization that brought about colonialism. At that time maritime nations were convinced that resources of the "New World" were free and up for grabs. Sklair (1991:82) clarifies the situation in this way:

The transnational corporations strive to control global capital and material resources, the transnational capitalist classes strive to control global power, and transnational agents and institutions of culture-ideology of consumerism strive to control the realm of ideas.

In the case of Africa resources include the people who inhabit the land. This is what is happening today with the new and more aggressive globalization of production which postcolonial theory tends to believe is irresistible. What this position means is that global economic imbalance is here to stay and that the world is doomed to monoculture and the tyranny of science. To those who think that globalization is irresistible I can only say, "never in history should the workers power be undermined." We shall be doing our people an injustice if we try to make them feel that all is well and that they are moving for the better and should therefore embrace whole heartedly the current of globalization. A similar warning was given by Walter Benjamin to his fellow countrymen and women at the time when Fascism was being embraced in Germany in the name of progress. Postcolonial theory should guide critics and analysts in making a historical assessment of globalization and its significance. Beams (1998) has made a magnificent preliminary assessment of it. He concludes his analysis as follows:

With the expansion of the world market and the development of globalised production, the old mole of history has done its work. What then is the task ahead? To construct the revolutionary party which will, in Trotsky's words, "revolutionise" the consciousness of the working class, just as the development of capitalism [has] revolutionised social relations (Beams, 1998:42).

Let me try, in this vein, a loose kind of conscientization here. I recently met a Tanzanian friend who praised liberalization policies with both his hands in

the air. He had bought some shares in two companies formerly owned by Government and was happy with the little he got at the end of the year. When I discussed the whole issue with him he said it was better than nothing. "During "Ujamaa" we got nothing while corrupt officials had it all", he said. We know the story of the Hare who refused to dig a well with other animals but when it was ready he stealthily drew water from it at night and even bathed in it. The other animals decided to guard it in turns. But Hare had a gourd of honey. Whenever he was caught he dipped a stick into the gourd and passed it on the lips of the animal that had caught him. "If you want more let me tie you on a tree", he would say. Every morning other animals found their colleague tied on a tree but none of them explained how it had happened for fear of being thought stupid. All animals weak and strong went through the same ordeal until Hare was found at last in the hands of Snail who had refused to accept any negotiation with Hare and resisted all temptations. Hare was taken to the king of animals – the lion. It was agreed that Hare should be killed. But Hare said, "If you want to kill me fast tie me with dry banana ropes and throw me into the ashes". The animals did so. Hare broke easily the ropes, landed comfortably in the ashes and escaped.

The narrative tells us a good deal about capitalist entrepreneurship, liberalization and free market economy. The powerful nations now drink in wells of our resources and even swim in them. They even use us to do the digging that we call employment opportunities. Outdated machinery is shifted to our land. Pollution and other manufactured risks (Giddens, 1999) are then our reward. Goods long banned in industrial countries are pushed through the pipeline of the free market economy. Multinational companies under the umbrella of IMF and the World Bank then come in to heal the wounds before another bite. It is impossible to sell Cocacola where people cannot afford to buy it and hence the recommendation, "Give them loans!" Let me stress that there is no fair play where opportunities for self-development are not equal. At individual level before embarking on the program of buying shares and entrepreneurship, equal opportunities that can empower the people and compete fairly have to be put in place first. In Tanzania, SACCOS investments seem to be on the right track because they originate from the people and are supported by local banks. At the level of the nation it should be noted that in a globalised economy nation-states with the lowest development of means and relations of production have been hit harder by pressure from above. Giddens (1999) notes that globalisation is the "reason for the revival of local cultural identities in different parts of the world."

How do we discuss these pertinent issues with the people? Certainly these questions have to be discussed before tying whole nations to agreements signed by ministers. Here is where creativity and the centrality of literatures in African languages come into the picture. Emphasis should first be laid on creativity.

Creative writing is only a small part of creative thinking. It is creative thinking that is the centre of all creative processes. We should be concerned more with the creation of concepts and new ideas, and the changing of concepts and perceptions among our people than make them believe that foreign languages are themselves the knowledge we need. African languages are the basic tools that can accomplish this task. But in order to succeed, African languages must keep their rightful position. All other institutions involved in the creative process and production of ideas must take this challenge. We should let these languages be the centre of the learning process in schools and universities; let them be used in the courts, in the media and in all social activities. African writers writing in African languages have shown the path, but they cannot move alone and hope to succeed. Other disciplines have to follow suit. This will complete the ontological circle and ensure a sustainable centre. Only then can we talk seriously about mastering our destiny and revolutionizing the consciousness of the working class. Modern history is a history of power.

This millennium will see the erasure of some African minority languages and their literatures. African literature in French, English and Portuguese which now exist in erasure to the majority of the people will either lose or gain ground depending on the pace of development of African languages and their literatures. The question of "techne" in all its forms, and the threat of a monoculture, a mono-economic structure with intensified competition and exploitation will force minority cultures to struggle for survival. Constraints of unemployment, social inequalities, extreme poverty and the question of environment will also push the human species to struggle for survival. These will be the sources of new paradigms in written and oral literatures that will face the challenge of urban legends as cities will begin to dictate new directions of interethnic and transnational cultural development. Literary theories will take their course according to social formations, and post-colonial theories as a "presencing" will have to negotiate with the past to create hope for the future. Technological consciousness and information technology that we have to acquire will sever the educated from their source of inspiration (the people) through the universalization of dialogue of the fittest. But the voices of the working class people through their languages and literatures will never be silenced. Those who were waiting for "Lefty" (Odets, 1935) think the play is over and have already left the theatre hall while the play is only beginning to build to a climax. We should not recognise ourselves in the languages of the other and permanently remain in the gaze of the Master. Our future should not remain locked up in the fate of imperial culture. Let us stay in the game as free speaking subjects to avoid erasure. To achieve this we have to invest in our languages and literatures as resources of knowledge and understanding and as strongholds of our being and becoming.

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