

The Literary Fragmentation in Francis Imbuga's *The Return of Mgofu*

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ABSTRACT

The study sought the literary fragmentation in Francis Imbuga's play *The Return of Mgofu*. Postmodernists posit that, there are no distinct ways of literary presentation. The study was guided by postmodernist approach. Postmodernism is achieved by postmodernist critics rising above the dichotomies between: realism and nominalism, formalism and contentism, pure and committed literature, clique fiction and junk fiction which tends to celebrate chance over craft. The study was informed by the objectives: to examine to what extent fragmentation influence Imbuga's play *The Return of Mgofu*. To investigate to what extent postmodernists' tenets influence Imbuga's play *The Return of Mgofu*. The study employed qualitative research paradigm which involves data collection procedures that result in open ended non numeric data analyzed using non statistical methods. The research employed a design of intrinsic case study. This was supplemented by a method of content analysis to collect secondary data concerning Francis Imbuga's play *The Return of Mgofu*. Upon which research has revealed that Imbuga's play *The Return of Mgofu* is a postmodernist drama which advocates freedom of artistic expression hence sensitizes groups and individuals to thrive in their literary expression.

KEY WORDS: Literature, African literature, Drama is action, Style, Return og Mgofu,

Technique in literature, Postmodern text, Postmodernism, Postmodern literature and Modernist literature.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Literary fragmentation is an important feature of postmodernist literature. Postmodernist is suitable for interpreting Imbuga's play *The Return of Mgofu*. This is because, literary fragmentation describes the manner concerning various elements of literary texts such as; plot, characters, themes, imagery and factual references being dispersed throughout an entire literary work. Generally literary fragmentation depicts an interrupted sequence of events, character development and action. Postmodernist employ literary fragmentation to communicate realities of time in which people have been disillusioned and therefore, ironically and playfully the artist finds a way of reflecting their inner states of minds by employing fragmentation. The artist has to devise a method of interpreting their inner consciousness which is literary fragmentation which calls for him to play within the chaos.

The chaos in Mndika state which might look fictional is no longer fictional and hence in order for playwright to shed light on the truth which leaders of Mndika state seem to have been sitting on has to play within the chaos. Playing within the chaos of the artist would not only offer the audience with the alternative possible solution but also involve them actively in restoring peace, integrity, harmony and progress in their nation. The skill in addition, will as well assist them in solving any other problem which they might encounter in near future amicably. This is because the world has turned chaotic and the chaos is in the rise due to egocentric, greed for power, tribal jingoism and the decline of morals as portrayed by Imbuga in his play *The Return of Mgofu*.

Postmodernism takes diverse forms in literature and other artistic fields, but all of these exist within an expansive set of ideas and values about the world and the modernist movement, (Chuck, 2008). Postmodernism describes a broad movement that developed in the mid to late 20th century across literary criticism, art, philosophy and architecture which marked a departure from modernism. Modernism describes a broad range of ideas; it is associated with enlightenment, sought for meaning and truth (Jameson, 1985). For instance; the novella *metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka Gregor turned into an insect after realizing he is late for a job.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Our study reviewed literature to explore how freedom of expression is depicted by the playwright through use literary fragmentariness in; irony, playfulness and presentation of unreliable narrators. Our study attempts to fill the Lacuna existing in the literary fragmentation in; narration, formal dramatic scenes, regular time sequence and psychologically explained characters in *The Return of Mgofu*. Killam (1984) asserts that Ruganda frequently places Imbuga's drama in the context of world war by drawing parallels to playwrights like Shakespeare, Soyinka and Brecht whose technique of alienation is portrayed as an influential source of Imbuga's drama. Imbuga's alienation technique is discussed in our subsequent chapters.

Our study has attempted to investigate how language medium forms an intermitted syntax structure which complements the illustration of main character Mgofu Ngoda subconscious fears in his exploration of a seemingly chaotic Mndika nation.

Ruganda (1992) presents Imbuga as a political writer in an oppressive society. In Ruganda's part one of his studies, he describes the inevitable tight rope walk Imbuga performs in his attempt to convey socially and politically relevant issues on one hand and avoid censorship on the other hand. Our study attempts to demonstrate how Imbuga conveys socially and politically relevant issues on one hand while avoiding censorship on the other hand. Kabaji (2012) asserts that Francis Imbuga was not just a writer but the best of who strode the literary landscape like a colossus, "he followed the paths of Great thinkers to whom violence is an abomination. Imbuga's play *The Return of Mgofu* provides possible ways of solving our societal crisis. Our study attempts to demonstrate how Imbuga's play *The Return of Mgofu* provides possible ways of solving our societal crisis

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This chapter unfolds with an overview of how we conducted the research. It entails the methodology which we employed to collect data within the sampled literary text. It describes the sampling procedures and research instruments we employed in data collection. We are aware that qualitative research lacks general agreement to its practitioners on how it ought to be proceeded

and what joins qualitative researchers together is the objection of the rigid approach to the quantitative followers' generation of research rather than internal agreement. Our research is purely qualitative in nature and it assumes a case study design of intrinsic case study. We employed this type of a case study for we intended to bring forth intrinsic nature of our particular case which is Imbuga's play *The Return of Mgofu* play.

The case of Imbuga's play *The Return of Mgofu* is of interest in itself. We employed a method of content analysis. The results we obtained were open ended and we analyzed the results using non statistical methods of summarizing. The results are valid and accurate in that we assumed an active participation in reading and interpreting the documents before we analyzed them, we acknowledged every source which gave insight to our study and we collected our data from published sources.

3.1 Data Collection

Kodhari (1992) defines method as a way of data gathering using generally recognized and theoretically grounded procedures. The method of content analysis which we selected arose from the paradigm of qualitative and tradition of an intrinsic case study which our research is situated. Our study being purely qualitative in nature, we employed content analysis method to collect secondary data from published documents and literary reports. These included literary texts, monographs, dissertations, manuscripts, books, articles in journals and review of tributes written to the late Davis Francis Imbuga. The study employed critical and imaginative reading and internalizing of the documents and hence conclusions were made through the interpretation of the texts. We took an active part in reading of the documents and our interpretation was guided by the tenets of postmodernist proponents.

3.2 Data Collection Instruments

Kothari (1992) postulates that data analysis is the process of trying to give meaning to first impression (what the researcher get from text) and final compilations (what the researcher will finally come up with as analysis process). In our participation we were facilitated by various tools and research instruments. We used a research journal and a note book to read and record the notes about our findings at regular intervals we revisited our text of study.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Influence of Fragmentation on Imbuga's Play, *The Return of Mgofu*

Imbuga ironically demonstrates that Mndika nationalists particularly leaders have ignored to embrace the virtue of wisdom no matter way they acquire hence, failure to bring unity to the nationalists. The play title *The Return of Mgofu* is allegorical. Mgofu is a Luhyia name which means wisdom. The play is about taking back wisdom which Imbuga demonstrates the Mndika nationalists ought to have acquired through their education knowledge or even naturally from the cultural values.

Imbuga employ a mimed dramatization which is a fragment. Imbuga's text demonstrates how genres previously deemed not fit for literariness can transform our chaotic societies. The reading of Imbuga's text tends to open up space for literature to thrive by decolonizing the critiques minds on the perception of realistic artistic expression. Imbuga tends to invent a new style of communicating the realities of time by inviting the audience to decolonize our minds from realistic (traditional styles) of presenting drama (literature). Imbuga draws on new styles of literary presentation which sensitize individuals and groups to join in literary artistic expression.

Contextually the play *The Return of Mgofu* setting is created by a conflict in which Mndika people have turned into ogres killing each other. 'Suja' Mdanya wonders on learning that Sariku an orphan was Msiega's daughter whose parents were killed due to land issues. "What is this about land that makes us kill one another like rogues and vagabonds?" (p.36). Imbuga demonstrates how people kill each other simply because of land and other selfish gains. Land which used to be a communal affair inherited from ancestors. The same land which makes people kill each other living orphans to reckon with. The contextual setting of the play depicts Imbuga's act of fragmentation to demonstrate the realities of time.

In the dialogue between Mgofu and the scouts sent by Mhando to spy on the existence of old Mgofu's son, a very relevant information is reviewed to us Through dialogue technique Imbuga demonstrates how good governance should treat her people by being servant of people and Mhando achieves that by initiating understanding of his inner circle members' responsibility to

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the nation, 'service' which was his strategy of reforming them. In Africa traditional way of leadership, governance was formed by members of council of elders who earned the post by their wisdom hence they were regarded as elders. Imbuga demonstrates through a dialogue the importance of wisdom

The main story is narrated by three unreliable characters. That is Thori, Thoriwa and Adonija. Thori and Thoriwa take us from open market where very important information is revealed to us about how the chaos in Mndika started. "We lived happily in the three ridges until that night, when a dredged man or woman set a neighbor's house on fire. No one bothered to know who had done and why, many houses were burnt and everyone ran northwards." "Thori and I ran to the shrine" (p.5). "Nora and her old husband walked and walked until they reached southern border of Mndika and Nderema" (p. 9). Imbuga merges Subplots with suspense to communicate realities of time. This style runs through the entire play. It is a technique that serves African works to outstand particularly in authentic and aesthetics. Subplot is whereby the artist intertwines the main story with subplots and suspense is employed to bring the two stories together. This can be viewed as postmodernist fragmentariness. Imbuga employs this technique in *The Return of Mgofu* to capture the audience attention.

Imbuga employs the shrine to tell the story the story for most of the activities seem to take place in the shrine. Imbuga employs it develop the structure of the play and the subplots. It is in the shrine where the second madness is set since it looks like the point of departure for the great blind seer who set to leave and seek refuge northwards.

Imbuga employs the shrine to screw the height of Mndika's madness of which burning of property is portrayed as common to an extent of burning scared places such as the shrine (p.7). Imbuga employs the shrine to shift events and most of the setting take place in the shrine. The second madness takes place in the shrine and that's why this agitates the blind seer sending him to exile when Mndika's nationalists' moral values have declined to the extent that they have no respect for scared places such as the shrine any more. He could not stomach such shear madness hence he had to leave in exile until when a peaceful leader was elected in Mndika, Mhando.

When the play opens for instance strange angelic music is heard. “The audience comprises of buyers and sellers. It is in the late afternoon. Strange angelic music as old man, Thori enters pushing a woman, Thoriwa, in a wheelchair. The manner of their costumes should be suggestive of the spiritual world” (p. 1) Imbuga merges music and drumming in the entire play with narration suspense and this enhances the telling of the story laughingly. The play opens with music and drumming and it closes the same way. Music and drumming is employed to comment on the narration, to facilitate distancing of the events in both time and space and also to complement the subplots and condemn on the injustices and also to comment of the virtues such as respect for peace and returning of Mndika’s symbol of peace back home.

4.2 Influence of Postmodernist Tenets to Imbuga’s Play, *The Return of Mgofu*

The unreliable narrators (ancestral messengers)Thori and Thoriwa jokes of how they took refuge in the sacred shrine little did they know that they will be burnt inside and become the first to join the ancestral spirits. They say they did not come to revenge but have forgiven those who committed such acts (p.7).This can be explored by the tenet of fragmentation which depicts playfulness, black humor and irony. Their tongue in cheek try to bring order to the chaotic Mndika Nation.

Verbal irony is depicted when they observe that they did not come to revenge. Despite the play employing playfulness and actual achievement of order and meaning being unlikely the play contains a serious subject and a complex structure of leaders of Mndika state turning into ogres hence subjecting their nation into endless calamities.

Imbuga tends to demonstrates that black humor and playfulness can respond to the horrors of life that has grown from Mndika’s second madness. Imbuga tends to demonstrate how parody of different genres can bring order in Mndika chaotic society. The humor eases the tension of the situation in which the messengers were disillusioned by Mndika people’s acts. Imbuga is not perpetuating injustices which nationalist commit and go unpunished however, he ridicules them when Thori and Thoriwa being among those who were innocently burnt in the shrine returns to

preach forgiveness and peace. Imbuga tends to invite us to critic our actions which turn other people's lives difficult and he condemns such acts and those who commit them.

Popular culture being a postmodernist tenet tends to explore unity for purpose in Imbuga *The Return of Mgofu* when he presents the audience with a mimed dramatized performance (p.64). The two creatures struggle at the first place when they appear on stage when they have horns. The horns give them a characteristic of animals meaning they lack brains. Imbuga tends to demonstrate that human beings lose their humanity when they tend to behave like animals. Imbuga satirizes Mndika's nationalists' actions when they killed one another due to greed for material gains.

Imbuga does not perpetuate their inhumanness but calls them to embrace change and retain their good name when the two creatures remove horns and assists one another in getting a totem each. Imbuga tends to demonstrate that sharing could bring happiness and joy but selfishness will only bring malice as one cannot enjoy when they have too much while others have nothing. Imbuga's mimed dramatization demonstrates the virtue of sharing and minding on others welfare a virtue if embraced can bring harmony to the chaotic societies.

Imbuga tends to demonstrate that genres which were previously not deemed fit for literature can be employed to reform the conflicts in our societies. Popular culture postmodernist tenet therefore, tends to explore literary fragmentation in Imbuga's play *The Return of Mgofu*. Imbuga's mimed dramatization which is a fragment tends to decolonize the audience perception of junk fiction. No wonder Ngugi speculates that, 'let a thousand flowers bloom.' p.64

Adonija who is depicted as being mad, reveals to us a very important information that, using evidence of his camera he witnessed Mgofu's death during the second madness, this depicts how technology can solidify the reality of literature likewise, he reveals to us how the corrupt regime went about purchasing local weapons and spoiled ones from one of the government officials (a close relative) yet these were not only dangerous but were spoiled ones(p.25).The tenet of globalization can be employed to explore the misappropriation of government resources and vernacular radio turning which is a clear indication of tribalism which.

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Imbuga's play *The Return of Mgofu* tends to demonstrate that national boundaries are hindrance to human communication. The misappropriation of government resources and vernacular radio turning is a clear indication of tribalism which elevates the overt corruption and exploitation and misuse of modern technology. Imbuga ridicules Mndika leaders who have lost their dignity due to greed. Selfishness, materialism, corruption and exploiting the masses. Modern technology is depicted as standing to solidify the reality of literariness when used to keep evidence of what people might think is fictional.

Imbuga tends to invite the audience to criticism by proposing use of wisdom which can offer better alternatives use of the modern technology; for instance to preserve our values, and spread our identity and culture globally. Imbuga tends to propose internationalism and uniting separate countries when he condemns the act of going local by use of mother tongue. He invites the audience to understand that nationalism in Mndika cause chaos and chaos hinder development.

Nations with chaos do not develop economically but they continue to rise the standards of living and hence hindering progress and promoting underdevelopment. Imbuga demonstrates that nationalism causes wars for instance when Mndika leaders opts to turn radio into vernacular to hinder communication barrier. The tenet of globalization when employed in Imbuga's *The Return of Mgofu* tends demonstrates where Mndika nationalists missed the mark. It therefore tends to demonstrate possible ways of solving the chaos by going global. The tenet of globalization is also depicted in Imbuga's play through the character of Nora Ulivaho.

"We also found out that his son is the personal assistant to Nderema's Prime Minister. He is also a qualified and well respected medical doctor...His children? Only two, the personal assistant and a girl. The girl is at the University of Southampton, studying international relations"(p.33).The above quote informs how Mgofu Ngoda is informed and exposed in the sense that he globalised his children through education and this made him quite informed.

The way he carried himself around was due to exposure and diversity of knowledge. Her daughter who is portrayed as educated is depicted as easy to go with that's why she regularly visits Mndika unlike her elder brother. This makes her embrace even to accept coming back on behalf of her aged father. Imbuga tends to demonstrate that global exposure and education

attracts development and unity while at the same time nationalism attracts wars. The postmodernist tenet of absurd explores such characters like Adonija. Being a witness of Mndika's madness alienates and isolates him from the real world. He appears to sleep talk. Absurd tenet again explores the mechanical relationship between Thori and Thoriwa. They are presented as repetitively engaging in pushing each other in a wheelchair.

The tenet of absurdity unfolds the reality about language. "There are those who deserve to be called elders. Age, experience and wisdom dictate that. But should we be called elders just because we happen to be the leaders of the day?" (p.38). This demonstrates how language can be coined to conceal the reality. This therefore, demonstrates the absurdity of the inefficiency of language to be an appropriate tool of communicating realities. Mhando observes that, "I admit it. That was a mistake. For some of you it should have been ETFS. Elder of Theft from the State" (p. 39). This depicts the truth of what was hidden behind the name elders. Imbuga tends to invite us to employ language to express the truth. Imbuga questions the use of language when he employs character Mhando who realizes that his members of inner circle do not deserve the name elders

In Mndika the madness was worse such that even those who sought refuge in sacred places were mercilessly burnt (p.6). In those actual events greed for power, individualism and tribalism is depicted as driving our nations mad when leaders are involved in shedding innocent blood of their brothers and sisters. Imbuga's play *The Return of Mgofu* speaks directly to the reader, a feat that is only obtainable because the text is aware of itself as a work of fiction. Historiographic metafiction being a key principle to postmodernist proponents can be employed to explore fictionality of Imbuga's play. Imbuga text fictionalizes Rwanda genocide of 1994s and Kenyan post election violence of 2007.

Imbuga's text is dedicated to those who have fallen in minor and major forms of genocide in Africa and beyond. This tends to demonstrate Imbuga's fiction of the reality of our nations. Mgofu confirms that in Nderema women have been incorporated in leadership that's why they have gone far. Ironically in Mndika there is no mention of women in the leadership but with the change of attitude and also Mhando wish to include them in his Sujas which is his strategy of reforming Mndika state. Mgofu's daughter Nora Ulivaho has been educated and she is the one to

return on behalf of her father. Through her Imbuga contents that real change in attitude has to be inculcated quite early in a child's life. Imbuga champions co-operation in aspects that can transform the society such as education and research.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A major finding in this study is that Imbuga's play *The Return of Mgofu* qualifies by all standards to be a postmodernist text. The play embraces literary fragmentation as a very powerful tool to communicate realities of time to the consumers of literature. The meaning which is wrapped in fragments playfully demonstrates what is expected of consumers and producers of literature as it concerns societal transformation. It is only by critical and imaginative reading that one realizes that some of the fragments are meant to entertain the audience, others are meant to condemn, others are meant to advice and others meant to inform even if they are rendered in a playful manner.

The fragments that are meant to condemn the consumers of literature often take the technique of a dream motif. Dream motif take two forms; Dream motif of sleep talking (conscious) of characters. The sleep talking usually condemn vices such as shedding of innocent blood, oppression, misuse of modern technology, misappropriation of nation funds, misuse of power, corruption, tribalism, egocentric, materialism, greedy for fame and power hungry. The condemned individual are often associated metaphorically and symbolically with both bad animate and inanimate objects and qualities (ogres and madness). People are condemned for the bad thing they do or they forfeit to do. In this way the play *The Return of Mgofu* serves the purpose of demarcating, projecting and predicting what the society ought to do by advising literary consumers to go global and shun those vices which hinder progress.

Human beings should integrate knowledge for human benefit of truth fidelity. This the play does by questioning the nature of telling stories by employing characters with disturbed mind to sleep walk and sleep talk. On the other hand the dream motif with (unconscious character) who appear to be asleep. The unconscious dream usually condemns vices such as driving people in exile, overlooking a serious existing problem and ignorance of responsibility. The oppressed

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individuals are symbolically presented in form of animates such as birds. People are condemned for what they have done evil or what they have failure to do which makes evil triumph. This motif demonstrates that the play serves to demonstrate that knowledge should be an idealistic end in itself (a tool capable of bringing liberty on social benefit of good faith) and thinking. The play demonstrates that facts exists outside the process of speaking them. This becomes an awakening step of the condemned leaders to strive to be responsible in their responsibility and not overlooking any serious problem. Mhando strive to bring Mgofu back home and restored peace in Mndika state and the culture of respect for the death was instilled.

Advice fragments take the technique of dialogues/dramatized performance. The dialogue technique/dramatized performance usually present multiple ways of solving an existing problem that has been seriously disturbed people causing them to lack peace and happiness.(Mhando has been lacking sleep due to strange dreams). The amicable possible ways of solving an existential crisis are simply dramatized leaving room for those concerned to discern for themselves. In this way the play serve the purpose of advising the society to follow the paths of great thinkers to whom violence is an abomination. From dramatized performance policy maker/leaders learn on seeking solutions that cherish respect, integrity and peace.

The fragment that informs assumes the technique of concrete poetic images. All characters in the play are employed to represent certain values. The concrete poetic images of characters usually extol good character with the praised individual often being linked metaphorically or allegorically to good animate qualities. Characters are praised for the good things they do as well as what they are capable of doing. Mgofu represents peace, harmony and prosperity (wisdom). Kadesa means motherly, Adonija means witness of truth, Nora Olivaho means the one who will always be there (for Mndika people). In this way the play *The Return of Mgofu* serves the purpose of delineating, projecting and predicting what society want done.

The fragments that entertain consumers of literature assumes playful/humorous/narrative/suspense/ technique. The playfulness usually eases stage tension and emotions as character's disillusionment is interpreted by irony. Despite the playfulness the same play *The Return of Mgofu* usually have serious subject and complex structure. The play *The*

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Return of Mgofu plays a role of speaking to people's hearts. The playfulness thus assumes a central role making the actual achievement of order and meaning unlikely. This makes Imbuga a postmodernist to be referred to as a teller of the truth laughingly.

What concerned us most in this study is who the message particularly target. It was interesting to remark that all the instances of dream motifs we identified in the play message which is specifically directed to national leaders and leaders of all systems. The message ridicules them for the injustices they have done to the people they serve. This means that the main target of condemning message is particularly and by extension of all leaders regardless of where they act as heads. The message in the dream motif unfolds how the leaders mishandle the people they ought to serve and misuse their power with the help of modern technology and they use language to hide the truth. It is quite ironical since knowledge acquired from education ought to make them humane. The message in the dream motif seem to give the indentation that postmodernist literature view leaders as determinants of success in any globe, continent, nation, system or even a household than any other stakeholders (the rest of members). This calls for the leaders' active participatory/transparency/integrity and diplomacy if success is to be realized. This qualifies our earlier projection that knowledge and truth are results of historical or political reason which are contextual and constructed to varying degrees.

Similarly the message passed on through dialogue techniques confirms that postmodernist aim to demonstrate possible multiple solutions to consumers of literature. However, it is upon the consumers of literature to find the best solution possible to solve the conflicts. Imbuga therefore, dramatizes the solutions through dialogue but indirectly leaving the audience to discern which way to go about the solution. This qualifies our earlier extrapolation that fragmentation and extreme subjectivism in literature presentation is an existential crisis, the artist is powerless and the only course against defeat is for the artist to play within the chaos.

Besides, the one and the only dramatized performance demonstrate that even genres which were previously not deemed fit for literature they contain their own truth. This message is directed to both consumers and producers of literature. This demonstrates that the consumers of literature dictates what the literary discipline ought to produce. The literary production also is dictated by the needs of a particular era.

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The dramatized performance therefore, is meant to advise producers of literature not to overlook the changing trends of the artist role and also the changing needs of the digital era with diverse cultures. Indeed as we had projected one of our assumptions had embraced postmodernist freedom of artistic expression which sensitizes groups and individuals to join artistic expression.

With all our assumptions found to have been accurate it leaves no doubt that this study has amassed enough evidence to make it valid. To interpret any particular piece of postmodernist literature, critiques must understand the works' context and purpose because postmodernist literature is fundamentally based on the views that facts exists outside the process of speaking and presenting them. Therefore, Imbuga's play *The Return of Mgofu* is an effective tool of presenting literature that transforms our chaotic societies. This implies therefore, that postmodernist rise above the dichotomy between Junk fiction and coterie fiction. Hence, they tend to celebrate chance over craft by questioning distinctions between high and low culture by combining genres previously not deemed fit for literature. Fragmentation aspect and postmodern literary theory tenets/themes/ techniques befitting the study have been merged to form a coherence study which is original and unique as demonstrated by our findings. The findings of the research therefore, tend to fill the Lacuna that existed in the literature review.

Literary discipline should adapt to change with the digital era and accommodate genres which appear to be fragments, because despite of their non linear structure they express their own truth.

Literary discipline need to accommodate artists from diverse cultures whose creativity is shaped by the modern technology. Ngugi once said "let a thousand flowers bloom".

Nationalists should be sensitized on embracing amicable ways of solving problems by following the steps of great thinker to whose violence is an abomination.

Literary discipline need expand multiple ways of utilizing modern technology to contribute to evolvement of literature. The society should form polices and implement them with restrictedness which dismiss materialistic leaders who have no respect for the people they render their services to.

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