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Chris Wanjala

The real tyranny of the new media is what Augusto Boal calls “rehearsal for revolution?” The messages disseminated by these new media have a far wider reach and are directed at an individual. As Taban Lo Liyong said in 1969, in the East Africa Journal: “Knowledge about African can only be gained, as indeed knowledge on anything whatever, through hard study.” The challenge that our generation is putting to you is that knowledge has a bigger picture than some of us may imagine.

Any bearded African who reads this and says it ismall closely directed to him would be claiming similar sins that he has committed. He is making an effort to keep himself in the limelight.

The question is: can virtual communities that participate in development debates bring about real change? The answer, according to cultural analysts, is that the media creates communities with “no sense of place”. Theatre for development, especially in Africa, needs to reinvent itself if it has to remain relevant.

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Kenya hosts many foreign writers

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might have committed and therefore stands guilty as charged.

This country has created a home for many creative writers, artists, musicians, dramatists, and literary critics as arrogant and self-opinionated as Esiri Mphahlele's apartheid South Africa; to the extent that when I read Ghana's Joe de Groff's play, Mentum, or watch a production directed by the Sierra Leonian Janet Yoing, or visit Elnino Njoroge's Pasu Pasu Art Gallery which arose from Esiri Mphahlele's Chemchemi Cultural Centre, I do not feel that these people are foreigners in our midst.

I am so used to Okot p'Bitek and Theo Lanuwa working with me at the East African Literature Bureau, Aumon Bwana, Cliff Lubwa's P'Chong, John Ruganda, Elavna and Pino Stoller, Charles Ohooch, Baboucher Tejani, Henry Kibugwe, Esther Muyoto, Patroco Abangira (all Ugandans) and Gabriel Rubumuliza, Euphraise Kenzubali, Elshaim Hussein, and Florence and Francis Masang (all Tanzanians) as my brothers and sisters in the literary fraternity that I do not see foreigners in them.

The three Ugandans who enriched the Institute of African Studies of the University of Nairobi include Taban Lo Liyong, Okot p'Bitek, and Francis Inngamoga. No one discriminated against them. They complained more about the wildness of the Institute's Uganda than the wildness of Kenya.

Taban, for one, was received with open arms and got a job at the Cultural Division of the Institute of Development Studies, which he could not get in Uganda. He subsequently moved to the Department of Literature when the University College, Nairobi, became a full fledged university.

Before that, all African lecturers were called 'Special Lecturers' whether they had doctoral degrees or not. Taban, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Fred Otachi, Godfrey Murindi and probably Taban Lo Liyong himself. They did not qualify to be lecturers because of their skin. While most writers from Europe, Austria, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa were given preferential treatment.

When Ngugi wa Thiong'o took over as chairman of the Department of Literature from Professor Andrew John Gur, he later left the University of Nairobi for the University of Leeds, he was appointed by the central management of the university. He was not installed by Taban Lo Liyong as an individual. It is common knowledge that departmens of English in Kampa, Dar es Salaam and Nairobi had British heads and it took them many years to believe that an African could head a department of English in a university.

University of Nairobi's English department, with the campaign mounted by members of the Fourth Estate like Philip Ochung, Awoor wa Kataia and Christopher Ochung, drummed the need for change and it was accepted not only by the university management, but by senior professors like Bethwell Ogot, who was the head of the Faculty of Arts, and Simon Omund, who was the head of the department of Geography.

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The more changes took place at the University of Nairobi, the more and more didactic affairs of state came to be pronounced. Taban Lo Liyong, through Frann Nagel, the director of the Goethe Institute, developed a cordial relationship with the German government. After a violent quarrel with the late Okot p'Bitek, his former teacher and fellow countryman, he left for the carved and partitioning of Africa in 1884. The East Africa Protectorate, as Kenya was known then, became a British territory.

The Agirumsa, Nduli and Buku Kught against the British, who seized fertile land from Africans. During the First World War (1914-1918), Africans were forcefully drafted as Carrier Corps.

In order to compel Africans to provide cheap labour on European farms, payment of taxes were introduced. African dissatisfaction led to the formation of political associations from the early 1920s.

In 1944, the Kenya African Union (KAU) was formed, strengthned by the return of war veterans from the Second World War (1939-1945).

However, the failure by KAU to bring about change led to the Mau Mau armed struggle, which was crushed in 1956, and independence came in 1963.

Post-independence political developments are well discussed from the Jomo Kenyatta and Oginga Odinga era in 1963 and their fall-out in 1966, followed by the Moi era of 1978 to 2002; the Kibaki, and Kibaki at Italy era giving way to the current Uhuru and Ruto era.

As a political narrative, the book is completely comprehensive and interestin. It is a history book meant for children. It is based on a narrative by one of the country's leading educatonists, Professor Jotham Otshiambori Ombisi Olembu.

Daniel Sifuna

Daystar to host new academy for writers

BY ETHER ODOR

Daystar University and a group of Kenyan writers have come up with a 14-week course on creative writing and publishing aimed at budding writers.

The concept of the 14-week course came after the success of the Authors' Buffet that was organised last year in the city and saw several writers within the city come together for discussions and book signing sessions.

'The Creative Academy' as the project is dubbed, will bring together some of the recognisable names in the current literary scene in the country for classes that will be held at Daystar's campus at Valley Road. There will be weekly (on Saturday) classes from the January 18 to the April 20 from 8am to 11am, during which different literary personalities in the country will facilitate the learning sessions.

The discussion and learning sessions will revolve around the basic and most often misunderstood ideas about writing, including why people write, the tools writers need in order to write and whether anyone can actually write. The facilitators will also look at how to develop good story ideas, how to tell