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## Popular culture and false consciousness

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### Abstract

This paper examines the concern by the early African critics that popular Culture was an example of false consciousness. In essence, it explores the popular cultural productivity which until recently is still assigned a marginal position in scholarship on the East Africa arts. This debate is enhanced by Owuor Anyumba, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Taban Lo liyong, Chris Wanjala, Henry Chakava and Elizabeth Knight who castigate popular works for their irreverent content. They seek to distinguish between elite literature and popular literature in terms of themes and formal stylistic features. Some of these critics argue that popular writings are wholesale replicas of western pulp fiction because most of it tap themes like crime, sex, prison, local politics and local intrigue other than enhancing the African ethos. This study is qualitative, employing discourse data obtained from a close reading of the text, and guided by post-colonial theory in the process of its enquiry.

**Keywords:** culture, false consciousness, population

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### Public Interest Statement

Popular cultural productivity was at first assigned a marginal position in scholarship on the East Africa arts. This study therefore tries to establish whether popular cultural productivity is a form of false consciousness or whether it can be wholly accepted and applied in elite literature and then given prominent position in scholarship.



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## Introduction

The debate about what constitutes serious cultural production especially with reference to literature has been in circulation in African countries - since the seventies, it is only recently that popular literature and culture in general is beginning to receive the critical attention that it deserves within the academy. As was noted by Kwame Antony Appiah:

For all the while, in African cultures, there are those who will not see themselves as other. Despite the overwhelming reality of economic decline; despite the unimaginable poverty; despite wars, malnutrition and disease and political instability, African cultural productivity grows a pace; popular literature, oral narratives and poetry, dance, drama, music and visual art all thrive. The contemporary cultural production of many African societies and the many traditions whose evidences so vigorously remain – is an antidote to the dark vision of the post-colonial novelist (1992, p. 157)

Appiah reminded us that in spite of all the difficult conditions that continued to plague the continent, African cultural productivity grew a pace ‘unfortunately it had been assigned a marginal position in scholarship on arts in sub-Saharan Africa. According to Barber (1997), Appiah hailed the hybridist of this culture. The figure he chose as an emblem of the vitality of African cultural production is a wooden carving of a Yoruba man with a bicycle’ a modern – looking ‘Polyglot’, ‘neo-traditional’ figure, confident in his multiple heritage.

Studies also show that popular culture not only lives and mediates the daily experiences in the contemporary Africa, but it remains one of the significant windows through which the problems that continue to plague the post-colonial state in Africa could be analyzed and understood (Lindfors 1991 and 1996; Barber 1997 and 2001; Newell 1997, 2000 and 2001). Recent studies on popular literature and culture have shown that popular cultural and narrative forms are particularly excellent sites for understanding complex issues of power, especially authoritarian societies where many people lack access to forums of political debate (Odhiambo 1987). To set ground for debate, the paper conceptualized various terms that are vital in the exploration of popular culture.

## Conceptualization of terms

One important concept to this study is ‘the popular’. The “popular” as Bourdieu observes is always ambiguous because it comes to us inscribed with the history of political and cultural struggles (Bourdieu, 1983). It is a site of contested evaluation. Also, it has long been used pejoratively. In twenty first century, the pejorative thrust has been renewed by the conflation of the idea of popular with the idea of mass culture: seen by many cultural critics of both left and right including the influential post - war Frankfurt School dominated by Adorno and Horkheimer - as mechanically produced pap controlled by a manipulative state to brain wash its passive citizens. But “popular” has also long been a focus for approbation and championship, to the point where anything produced by the

people is automatically valued. Popular sovereignty and popular democracy, highly value - charged terms, assume that what is popular is by definition good.

Popular culture in many discourses occupies a self-evidently positive position, and the task then becomes one of distinguishing between what is truly popular, and what is contaminated by hegemonic ideological infiltrations from above. The concept of False consciousness can be understood by first trying to consider what Friedrich Engels wrote concerning the problem of ideology: 'Ideology is a process accomplished by the so-called thinker consciously, it is true, but with a false consciousness. The real motive-forces impelling him remain unknown to him; otherwise it simply would not be an ideological process' (Engels, 1968). Intrinsic to Engels's thesis is the notion that there exists a split, a kind of bifurcation of consciousness: that one adopts not only ideas that are not one's own, but also, and perhaps more importantly, thinks in styles and 'logics' that are not one's own either.

The term culture has frequently been used by sociologists to denote the way of life of a society. This concept has been adapted from social anthropology where in the late nineteenth century, E.B. Tylor used it to describe that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and many other capabilities acquired by man as a member of the society (Tylor, 1871). If society is composed of social institutions and activities, then culture defines values and beliefs that underlie those institutions, activities and the form they take, whether they are the family, education, religion, or even what is acceptable to eat and the way it is eaten. The focus is on shared meanings. This way of looking at culture is sometimes described as the culturalist view, where the stress is on interpreting the meanings of culture that is lived.

The term 'popular culture' has been variously defined but in this study our interest is based on what it is contrasted with. In some usages it describes everything that is left over when high culture has been taken into consideration, or it is used as a synonym for 'mass culture'. In other usages, popular culture is compared unfavourably with a pre-industrial folk culture and, is thought to have little intrinsic value or worth.

The concept of hegemony, however, allows for different interpretation, in that popular culture can be seen as cultural activity that emerges from 'the people', in all their various guises, including resisting their position as a sub-ordinate group or challenging their consensual role as recipients of an imposed culture. It is in this light that many writers (particularly those at the centre for contemporary cultural studies at the University of Birmingham) have examined a wide variety of groups such as youth, ethnic minorities, women's groups and many aspects of working-class culture.

### **Popular Literature at Crossroads**

The debate about popular literature has tended to revolve around its utilitarian value as an art form and has been a salient part of East African literary scholarship for decades. Ogude and Nyairo (2007) observe that Chris Wanjala's pejorative dismissals of 'Pulp fiction' by writers like Maillu in 1970s as non-literature is perhaps one of the high points in this debate. The debate itself was underpinned by a highly prescriptive tendency in literary scholarship

in east Africa generally and one which was guided by a narrowly conceived idea of what constitutes utilitarian literature which was often constructed around the moral war-heads of good and bad literature (p. 3). Popular art chiefly represented by romance literature in this debate, was dismissed as derivative of western bedroom literature and by extension of low culture and low morals. At best they were entertaining but nevertheless, escapist because they could never draw people's attention to what Wanjala had, described as 'burning issues of the day' (1980).

From a lay man's understanding, we can argue that Maillu is a moral crusader who represents the truth as it occurs on most urban centers. He portrays immorality in a more vivid manner and the reader of his works is left to judge whether he is passing on relevant information or not. On the other hand, some critics have viewed his work as bad literature that raid morals.

Elizabeth Knight, writing on popular literature in the seventies also castigated writers of popular literature in East Africa for lack of lack of originality and for imitating western mode of writing whose sole aim was mass-production and profits. Here, I argue that what Wanjala and Knight did not put into consideration was that all modern African literatures and even the so called serious literature were in many ways indebted to western literary modes. Little was done to understand the kinds of literary interventions these writers were making. And as recent studies by Newell (2000), Barber and Waterman (1995) and Barber (1997) have shown in the context of West Africa, those writers who model their writings after certain western modes of creation do so by reworking and re-situating them to serve local needs and quite often, with amazing interpretation of the foreign modes by local aesthetics.

The end result of this hostile attitude towards popular literature was the assumption that 'real' popular culture repertoire of the sub-continent resided in the past or at best writing in some unmediated idiom and language of the people was unacceptable, an idea that is fully supported by Bertolt Brecht. This trend came to be associated with traditional 'other' – some ossified form rooted in some unchanging tradition and quite often residing in the rural areas was very much part of the 'literary revolution' that was led by Kenyan scholars, Owuor Anyumba and Ngugi, at the University of Nairobi in the late 60s and 70s. Wanjala (2007) reminds us that this project which was hailed as a radical was aimed at locating African literature at the core of its syllabus and to show aesthetic essence and value. Its literariness did not reside in 'Englishness' but Anyumba, Ngugi and Lo liyong had deliberately instituted a project in oral literature that demanded of students, even those who had no roots in rural areas, to return to the source as it were in order to capture a cultural reservoir of the people that was fast dying under the onslaught of western modernity. The nationalitarian impulse underpinning this project at this stage of our history cannot be gainsaid even when we may want to criticize the veracity of its epistemological grounding. A lot of literary material was collected and published.

One must concede that the experience of colonialism attempted to repress Africa's popular culture which in many ways provided potent sites of nationalist resistance against colonial rule. But colonialism as Amilcar Cabral reminds us, did not annihilate African

cultures and quite often popular culture expressions existed as living and dynamic entities alongside or/and in dialogue with external cultures of the west. This dialogue has been central to making of African cultures that the development of popular culture, as with other cultural facets in Africa, cannot be understood outside the wider, tension and fusion between outside influences and local appropriations.

This is the point Barber makes when she writes that ‘There is a vast domain of cultural production which cannot be classified as either “traditional” or “elite”, as “oral” or “literate”, “indigenous” or “western” in inspiration, because it straddles and dissolves this distinctions’(1997, p. 2).

It is worth noting that writers such as Meja Mwangi are castigated for their mode of writing. Angus Caidler talks about Meja Mwangi as one of the popular writers from East Africa whose writings are a replica of the western mode. He asserts that many readers in the region “prefer tales of faraway places to stories about local area”. He defines thrillers in the popular vein as books written to entertain despite the fact that they have little literary value. Authors of thrillers base their worlds on the popular culture of their time. The books are contemporary. Some of the books that are in the popular style by Meja Mwangi are *The Bush trackers* and *Carcase for Hounds*.

This style of writing also receives criticism from Chris Wanjala who comments that the author is not serious, because he “Writes in a happy-go-lucky manner. His talent lies in the capacity to tell a good story and rendering dramatic scenes in which gunshots are heard”. Wanjala admits that Meja Mwangi’s descriptions of people, the environment, including its smells, are superb. But he is one of those authors who are more imitative than they are imaginative.

Wanjala may have argued that Meja Mwangi is imitating the west but the truth on the ground is that the Third World is in some way dependent on international influences. Mwangi writes in the conventional western popular modes of fiction. His works have had a place in the ‘popular’ simply because of his ability to thrill and entertain even though have little literary value. We must be aware that openness to foreign cultural influences need not involve only an impoverishment of local and national culture but should incorporate both western and traditional culture.

Henry M. Chakava has taken East Africa and Central Africa and Central Africa by storm. As a literary critic and a commentator in the African literary scene, he has done a lot to promote writing in Africa. Mr. Chakava has a thoroughly ettic view of African literature in the 1970s:

There was a good reason for lack of aesthetics. We spoke of Negritude, ‘Black is beautiful’ and wanted to compare the West. We felt (naively) that our moral values were superior and our cultural values as well. Now things are different, it is more inward-looking. The Kenyan writer is addressing the Kenyan reader. In those days, the 60s; Ngugi, Soyinka and Achebe were addressing the former colonial masters with pride and disdain. They describe Africa to outsiders, to American and European readers. You feel Achebe

describing Africa to outsiders as if the Igbos won't read his novel. With all its weaknesses, Kenyan literature is targeted at all Kenyans first and foremost. Now we can talk about ourselves (Darysh, 2002).

Chakava has done a lot in the industry of publication of Spear books. As Wanjala notes, this series compares with the pacesetters of Macmillan Publishers and the Afro Romance of Trans-Africa publishers.

Okoth Okombo sees the dichotomy between "Popular" and "Serious" literature as spurious: there need not to be a distinction between what people read and what scholars read. The difference could be that literature will have layers – a layer for the street reader and another layer for the professor (In Danysh 2002, p. 17).

Serious works like Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God* and *Things Fall Apart* attract readers in the educational mill because of their humour, satire and irony. But the popular novels attract readers because of the directness of the message. The young readers like popular literature because of its irreverence to conventions and instructions.

### **Rethinking the Relationship between Popular Culture and Popular Writing**

Different scholars have different views on popular culture. By popular culture, we mean the culture preserves, rescues and incorporates elements whose content is eminently popular, that is to say the culture which strengthens ethnic and class consciousness' (Etherton, 1982, p. 321). African literature produced at home has always been popular. Writers like Ngugi wa Thiong'o who are mainly published in Europe and North America are a Red Herring in the debate about popular literature at home (Wanjala 2007). Ngugi had insisted on the kind of literature that would animate the spirit of the people, meaning the working class and the rural peasantry. After a decade of practice, Ngugi moved full circle and turned to oral tradition as the bulwark of popular culture. As he was to reflect on his essays of return, *Decolonising the mind* (1986), he writes: 'In search of the image that would capture the reality of neo-colony that was Kenya under Kenyatta and Moi, I once again fell on the oral tradition' (1986, p. 80). Ngugi's intention was to promote popular culture by reaching more people who could not understand the foreign language and more from this ethnic community.

Ngugi writes in his mother tongue simply because it is a way of promoting 'authentic' oral forms of the Gikuyu. A closer look at Ngugi's earlier novels show that Ngugi has always been indebted to Agikuyu oral tradition and his latest shift in the works written in Gikuyu should be seen, 'at least in the sense of appropriating oral forms. Not so much as a rupture but as a continuation and a more radical development towards a syncretic use of both Gikuyu and western modes of creation' (Ogude 1999, p. 87). And the significance of Ngugi's shift to his mother tongue for our purposes here lies precisely in the place of African-language writing in the literary historiography of East Africa. The nature of the problem was both ideological and political. At an ideological level, it was assumed that writing in vernacular language was inferior and by extension deserved no attention in the cultural universe of the sub-continent – it had nothing to do with the lack of history writing

or a vibrant oral tradition in the sub-region. The second issue was both ideological and political in the sense that the English literature syllabus had privileged works written in English and denigrated those written in African languages, total oblivious of the fact that vibrant cultural output continued to be produced in these languages, whether in the form of music, *mashairi* (epic poems), local theatre and short stories (Ogude and Nyairo 2007). Kenyan popular novels of sex and violence, in which Chris Wanjala has characterized as ‘pornoaesthetic’, surprisingly always portray women - even prostitutes, predators and patsies – as the means of regeneration for aggressively ‘bad’ macho protagonists. John Kiriamiti’s *My Life in Crime*, the true story of a convicted armed robber, depicts a series of hair raising escapes ending in arrest and imprisonment (1984). The plot is exciting, humorous, sexually titillating and full of exploits with women, at the same time it contains a parallel narrative which tells a quite different story. Instead of a desperate thug, the protagonist represents himself as a well-intentioned person who becomes a criminal almost by default.

In an analysis of readers’ responses to the novels of Kenyan writer David Maillu, Chris Wanjala shows how, by depicting scenes of prostitution, crime and low-life, Maillu is perceived by some, not as corrupting the reader, but as a moral crusader on the side of right (Wanjala, 1980). Maillu’s sex scenes are regarded as educative, ‘thus Maillu is something of a family psychiatrist, a moral philosopher, and, if you will, the adviser of youth’ (Wanjala, 1980). But only for some, his portrayal of the prostitute in *After 4.30* he has led many East African readers to call for the book to be banned (Wanjala, 1980). Certainly he pulls no punches in his representation of women as sex objects and victim in this novel-in-poetry (which Elizabeth Knight dismisses as ‘not really poetry but prose sentences dissected and arranged in short lines on the page’ (Knight 1979), which ends with a plea by the prostitute to her son to stand for her and protect her against the violence of her exploiters.

Counter balancing this pessimistic portrayal of women as prostitutes and powerless is Cyprian Ekwensi’s novel *Jagua Nana* (1987). The figure of Jagua, alluring, hedonistic, seductive, tough, down-to-earth and materialistic, is an emanation of Lagos itself in the heady days of high life and post-independence optimism. She is the quintessential city woman, in a context where the pleasures and excitement of the city are bought at a considerable risk. Even when Jagua Nana returns, as she does, to the village, to recuperate and regenerate, it is still the city which gives the narrative its dynamism. Jagua, a Lagos prostitute ends with a vision of her future as an Onitsha merchant princess with ‘me own shop, and lorry and...me own driver’ (Ekwensi, p. 192). A reading of *Jagua Nana* as an example of what Asenath Bole Odaga objects to in Kenyan popular writing – that women are portrayed as prostitute, victims of the emergent money crazy society which dehumanizes practically all its members, sensual oversexed and perverted’ (Odaga 1990, p. 133), only emphasizes on the difference that has been noted between Kenya and Nigerian constructions of the rural/urban opposition. *Jagua Nana* is a celebration of the vitality and resourcefulness of the city woman, whose chastening is a stage on her triumphant progress. The tradition of women organizing separately from men, so well established in West Africa, has resulted in women forming blocs and factions which are acknowledged

as a force to be reckoned with (Bryce, 1997).

It is my conviction that popular writing can be read in more than one way because it may contain meaning that are not always immediately accessible to a surface reading. Richard Priebe demonstrates how Ghanaian popular novels operate symbolically to provide a 'concealed catharsis' (p. 87), but they have to be read for a submerged text before this is revealed from the works of several critics, one realizes that most writers have an intention of educating the readers thus confirming my argument that popular culture is not an example of false consciousness.

In her comprehensive overview, 'popular arts in Africa', Karin Barber states: 'Popular art can be taken to mean the large class of new unofficial art forms which are syncretic, concerned with social change, and associated with the masses (1997, p. 23). In arriving at this definition, she examines the use of most scholars of the tripartite model: traditional/popular/elite, and points that it really comprises of two positive terms, with a fluctuating undefined and shapeless space between them (9). Above all what characterizes this fluid and unstable space is, in Bakhtin's phrase, its 'unofficial' nature in relation to the institutional status of both the other categories. This means that the makers of popular culture are free to take liberties, to combine elements of different forms, to deviate from official boundaries which fail to confine them. Even with 'unofficial' category however, the pre-dominant convention that has emerged, with respect to popular fiction is one of sex-and-violence sensationalism with aggressively macho heroes, and women represented as seducers or sex objects. While there is a considerable deviation from the paradigm even on the part of texts which are avowedly 'popular' and received as much by readers and critics, the fact that women writers generally have a quite different agenda makes the reception of their texts more problematic (Bryce, 1997).

Texts by women which for reason of presentation, or literary skill or content in the 70s were not recognized as 'serious', they also failed to be seen as 'popular' precisely because their representation of gender was less objectified and stereotyped. Because they tended to place themselves in overt opposition to the sex-and-violence paradigm, they were dismissed as too 'Conservative' or 'moralistic', too 'trivial' or 'personal' too pre-occupied with the material and mundane (Bryce, 1997).

The process of judgment on whether to classify them as elite or popular, of course, affected women's writing in the 'official' as well as the 'unofficial' sphere, as can be verified by looking at what is considered appropriate material for students of 'African Literature' in the universities both in Africa and elsewhere. Texts written by women were frequently relegated to 'women's studies or black women are writing courses, rather than being seen as in any central. It is only recently that writings by women have been considered authentic. Margaret Ogolla, Mary Karooro Okurut, Grace Ogot, Marjorie Oludhe, Yvonne Owuor, Asenath Bole Odaga, Muthoni Likimani, Florence Mbaya, Micere Mugo and Moraa Gitaa are among the women who have dominated the East African literary scene.

Berth Lindfors has drawn up a league table based on how often certain titles recur in the curricula of group of African Universities (1990). It comes as no surprise that the top names are Achebe, Soyinka and Ngugi. Way down the league the most established

women writers; Flora Nwopa, Ama Ata Aidoo, Efua Sutherland, Buchi Emecheta. Absent from the 'canon' are of course popular writers and women other than the privileged few. Cyprian Ekwensi, for example, probably the Nigerian writer most widely read in Nigeria, hovers somewhere on the margins of 'elite' or 'official' literature; thanks to several of his titles having been taken on by Heinemann. Publishing and teaching, the two primary mechanisms of canonization in Africa, select and evaluate texts according to criteria which are still largely based on new critical notions of 'excellence' and the expectations of an elite readership. Hence there is a hiatus between what is sanctioned as 'good' and enduring and what is marginalized as cheap, ephemeral and bad. While this affects all writing in Africa, it affects women's texts in a particular way (Bryce, 1997). In effect what emerges is a vertical scale of value in which writing by women, whether official or unofficial, occupies a space further down than male-authored oriented texts, because in both cases they fail to conform to the prevailing expectations of either critics or readers. This relegation occurs notwithstanding the diversity of forms of expression, whether in English or African languages, written or 'non-literary', and takes place both in the African and Western literary establishment.

African 'popular culture' is becoming a significant field of enquiry, attracting excellent scholarship. In South Africa, David Coplan's detailed and respectful study of South African township culture, *Township Tonight* (1985) has been followed by Liz Gunner's rich anthology of new work on South Africa, *Performance, Politics and Performance* (1994), by Veit Erlmann's *African Stars* (1991), and Coplan's full-length study of the Basotho migrant workers' genre *lifela* (*In the time of cannibal*, 1994), more works have been produced in South Africa theatrical forms in Apartheid are dominant

Historians among the first scholars to take a serious interest in popular genres in Africa (Ranger 1975) for example have continued to regard popular genres as sources but also as objects of study in their own right, as Joshua Brown's collection of articles *History from South Africa* (1991) shows.

The assumption made by some early enthusiasts of African 'popular art' that it was an example of false consciousness is quite misgiving. Their assumption that it was by definition naïve, cheerful and carefree has been replaced by the recognition that genres billed as entertainment usually talk about matters of deep interest and concern to the people who produce and consume them. For instance in Nigeria, no one would wish to ignore the sheer hilarious ebullience of Speedy Eric's story (Obiechina, 1972) or middle art (Beier, 1962). Speedy Eric writes about a girl who is corrupted by city life and ends up dying of a bungled abortion in a public toilet, while one of the arts most famous in Obiechina's work portrays a young man committing suicide after having been drained off all his money by a gold-digging girlfriend. The 'Carefree' pamphlets from Onitsha market literature, Accra and Ibadan speak incessantly of the anxieties and dangers of women, money and waged work as well as of their joys, and of public corruption as well as private morality. Coplan's research on the lyrics of popular high life music, contain extended philosophical reflections absent in the 'elite' dance-band version of the music (Coplan, 1978).

In other words these arts are about things that matter to people. They may also

speak of real problems and proffer serious solutions. The kind of text e.g. the Kamirithu theatre by Ngugi – usually say only things that people want to hear. But while it is true that people usually want to hear that justice will prevail and that the good will be rewarded, they do not apparently want to hear escapist fantasies. The pace-setters novel which superficially may look a bit like Mills and Boons romances – are about confusion, survival, struggle, economic hardship, sexual and economic exploitation, stereotyped characters and plots do not prevent writers from dealing with real experience and if they wrest a happy ending from their plots it is hard-won.

Education plays an important role in the transformation of culture. According to Wanjala (1980), the Africans who are educated seem to be wallowing between western and traditional culture. They seem to be having no standpoint. In his work *The Season of Harvest* Wanjala recognizes Césaire as a writer in a colonized state. He draws heavily on *Return to my native land* argues that Césaire seems to be irritated by the way the educated Negro has been alienated. Alienation arguably in this paper is viewed as a form of false consciousness.

In dealing with alienation, one must be warned by Fanon's statement; one is making a pathological study: ... the subject of our study is the dupes and those who dupe them, the alienated and ... if there are white men who behave naturally when they meet Negroes, they certainly do not fall within the scope of our examination.

According to Césaire, the educated man strives into the white world. Usually his education is the initiation process into the white world. But this does not usually solve matters for the black educated. Education creates an ironical situation for the black man whereby he painfully oscillates between the white and the black worlds. Education prepares the Blackman for a lifestyle which is essentially European middle-class. He is culturally alienated. Cultural alienation should be understood as a process whereby the Blackman consciously and unconsciously runs from his individuality by seeking to be assimilated into the white culture. Aime's aspiration as an artist is to help his people regain their consciousness, re-assess whiteness as a source of salvation for him and reject it. This is to say the black artist sets out to educate the hitherto passive blacks into a politically active Blackman. This is why Ngugi chooses to write in his mother tongue. He also recognizes the effort of another writer Gakaara wa Wanjau who also writes in Gikuyu. Gakaara established his own Gakaara book Service for publishing and distributing books. He had an impressive list of novelettes, political essays, songs and poems and sheer agitational material, all urging people to higher resolves in their pursuit of land, freedom and the redemption of their culture. Unfortunately all his books were banned and he himself arrested and detained for ten years from 1952 to 1962. Banning and rejecting books written in mother tongue is also a form of false consciousness even though currently most Africans write in African languages. These books have been accepted in schools and other higher institutions of learning.

In my argument about popular writing in this paper, I make fairly assumption that 'popular writing is normative and that it reflects the current values of a society whereas the so called 'elite' literature 'anticipates change'. Some writers appear to be vulgar in

their writings but their main intention is to create a society that is more conscious on immorality.

### **Conclusion**

This study argues that false consciousness depends on the standpoint of an individual. This is because the contemporary cultural production has been affected by the effects of colonialism. It is worth noting that cultural production can be divided into two halves: on one hand there is the traditional art and on the other hand there is modern art which is greatly influenced by the western. At every turn in the cultural development of our society the driving force has actually been the ethos of change. Indeed it has been about the active agency to manage the nature and pace of that change rather than simply a romantic and spurious commitment to a return to “authentic” and “originally” cultural practices of our people. The culture that we have been generating ever since our encounter with western modernity are complex hybrid creations that capture the flux of smodification and signal traditions and identities that are always in the making rather than ones that are sacred, static evocations of purist Africa. My argument here is that the early African critics should understand that of late there is cultural transformation: and those ethnic identities and their cultural practices are forever being transformed. So the question whether this amounts to dilution or enrichment depends on an individual’s point of view.

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### **Disclaimer Statement**

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Vincent Odhiambo Oduor is a part-time lecturer at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kenya. He holds a Master of Arts degree in literature from the University of Nairobi and currently undertaking a PhD course in Comparative Literature at Masinde Muliro University. He has published several journal articles which include, ‘Artistry and postcolonial issues in Wole Soyinka’s The Interpreters’, ‘Rewriting History of Kenyan Nation in Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s Dreams in a Time of War and others which have been published in reputable refereed journals. He is currently working on an anthology of poetry that will inspire young adults.

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