

Introduction

To define the identity of a modern African country, within the Eurocentric interpretive framework, imposes creative limits. Therefore, an insider's perspective is the point of departure in the paper "Modern Kenyan Identity: Crafting a Nation Through Monuments". Some elements of modern philosophy are outlined. They are considered the bedrock of cultural modernism. Most of Nairobi's monuments are not in the modernist style; they are figurative-representational, begging the question of why a 'modern' state does not express itself using a congruent style. The implied argument is the seemingly haphazard selection of a style that may (or may not) speak for a people's philosophy. These monuments mirror Kenya's fluid culture; they are simply symbols that try, with qualified success, to gather disparate peoples into a modern collective. In "Modern Kenyan Identity: Crafting a Nation Through Monuments", **Lydia Muthuma** uses a series of images to support this argument.

In "Language as a Liberation Aesthetic: Ngũgĩ's Use of Gikũyũ in *Mũrogi wa Kagogo* [*Wizard of the Crow*] and Other Works", **Maina wa Mũtonya** tackles the aesthetics and politics of writing African Literature in local vernaculars. He critiques Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's choice; paradoxically, while globalization expands an author's audience, the use of vernacular shrinks it. Why choose vernacular over the more global English, and to what purpose?

An author relies on images that often flit across the mind; those mental reflections of the world around, according to Ngũgĩ. How does he write about Gikũyũ country and culture while immersed in American imagery and reality? This paper highlights the tension occasioned by artistic choices. Ngũgĩ's quest to place his native language on a global path, amid problems of orthography and lexicography, force him to anglicize Gikũyũ. He may find himself alienating readers, notwithstanding the obtaining cultural pluralism that seeks to understand all voices emanating from a plurality of centers the world over.

Gitau Muthuma describes "Contemporary Aesthetics of the Akurino: A Religion or a Cultural Movement?" as a unique blend of Christian religious practices and traditional African worship systems. The Akurino started as a response to the implicit imposition of cultural and political imperialism on Africans, through Christianity. It has however, morphed into contemporary minority religion or culture. Born of

economic discontent and frustration from the imperial powers, it has developed into a church tribe that is seemingly unassimilated to the west, where some Africans can and do feel at home. In this context, the author argues, Akurino may be viewed as a Christian religious sect and as an anti-colonial cultural movement underpinned by Christian religious undertones and beliefs. But is it more than this? The Akurino are the only religious sect, in Kenya, known to have a museum – a modern and contemporary medium of showcasing culture. The Akurino religious aesthetic offers a special and different flavour; a sense of commitment to the community. It is not only an indigenous African Christian sect but also a modern contemporary cultural movement.

Meanwhile in “What Does It Mean to be a Man? The Aesthetics of Telling Crisis’ and Conflicts in *Ngebe Gaa* and *Detox*” **Fredrick Mbogo** presents a reading of two films: *Ngebe Gaa* (2019) and *Detox* (2016). They both deal with the supposed crisis of manhood in some parts of Kenya. These are patriarchal settings where shifts in economic, social, and political life have taken place, necessitating a renewed look at defining a man within his society.

Ngebe Gaa which means ‘let us go back home’ is performed in Kalenjin and a smattering of Kiswahili, and has English subtitles, hence its popularity in the North Rift Valley area of Kenya. In the case of *Detox*, it won a Kalasha Award of 2017 in the Student Film category, organized by the Kenya Film Commission. It has also been screened at the 2017 Zanzibar Film Festival and at a New York Film Festival in 2018.

Ngebe Gaa and *Detox* deliberately tell stories that are identifiable to a majority of the local audience. Both constitute a play on ‘performance’ on what it means to be a man. A man should provide for his family; in both films, he cannot. *Ngebe Gaa* and *Detox* are texts that are in constant dialogue with other texts. They echo, converse with, or add to the body of works that depict a crisis in the idea of being a man.

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