

A LITERARY TURN IN AFRICAN STUDIES:

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THREE GENERATIONS OF AFRICAN WRITERS TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF DECOLONIALITY IN AFRICAN STUDIES

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Abstract

The literary turn in African Studies is conceptualized here not as entailing the shift to textual/ discourse analysis pioneered by Edward Said, but as how African literary figures have contributed to the advancement of decolonization/ decoloniality in African Studies. Its point of departure is the “decolonial turn”, which refers to the varied patterns of decolonial thought emerging from different geographic and epistemic sites. Although there are sometimes divergences among these patterns of thought, the salient point of convergence is their acknowledgement of coloniality as a problem haunting the world today, and of the task of decolonization/ decoloniality as unfinished.

There is, however, a tendency among certain scholars to trace the genealogy of decolonial thinking, ignoring the various contributions to decolonial thinking from other sites. This article attempts to fill this crucial gap by accounting, specifically, for an African literary genealogy of decolonial thinking through the lens of the concept of “generations.” The ideas of generations and turns in literary studies in particular, and African Studies in general, are complicated by the overlapping ideological dispositions of the writers.

Key Terms: Africa, (Anglophone) African literature, decolonial turn/ thought, generations, literary turn

Introduction

The 21st century is justifiably the age of insurgent and resurgent decolonization (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020b). Black people are reminding us of a fact which should have been too obvious: that their lives matter! In Cape Town and Oxford, young activists mobilised for the dismantling of colonial iconography (i.e., the statue of Cecil Rhodes). Globally, those referred to by Fanon (1963) as “the wretched of the earth” are forming epistemic alliances in a shared “insurgent and resurgent spirit of decolonization/ decoloniality” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020a, p. 23).

The battle also rages fiercely in the academic arena. The “westernized university” is charged with a twofold invidious crime, namely, its complicity in the superiorizing of Eurocentric knowledges, on the one hand; and the inferiorizing of non-Eurocentric ones, on the other hand (Cupples, 2019; Grosfoguel, 2013). University curricula have come under keen decolonial scrutiny, as evinced, for example, in the “Why is my Curriculum White?” campaigns in Cambridge and Leeds University. The spotlight has been put on research methodologies as gatekeepers who are anything but objective, innocent and neutral (Smith, 2021). That knowledges are always situated; and that no single knowledge can offer “universal truths about the world” is no longer a myth (Mpofu, 2014, p. 17). Appeals to “a-perspectiveness”, objectivity, or “zero-point hubris” (Castro-Gomez, 2021) are now seen as attempts at concealing one’s situatedness, and therefore, an indulgence in “gladiatory scholarship” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021b). These epiphanies fuel the demands to decolonize knowledge, power, being, gender; to unmask—as Walter Mignolo (2011) puts it—the “darker side of modernity”; and, ultimately, to bring the unfinished business of decolonization to completion.

This resurgence of decolonial struggles in the 21st century is in part due to the proliferation of Latin American scholarship on (de)coloniality/ modernity, which takes as point of departure the fact that colonial systems were not necessarily dismantled merely with the attainment of political independence by formerly colonized countries. As such, scholars such as Walter Mignolo, Ramón Grosfoguel and Anibal Quijano elect to use “coloniality” rather than “colonialism” to describe the continuation of empire well beyond

the retreat of physical empires. This has engendered an erroneous idea among certain scholars that (de) coloniality is an originally Latin American idea.

In this article, I respond to this misconception by posing the question, “What is the contribution of African literature to decolonial thinking?” This question is necessitated not only because of the tendency among scholars to side-line the immense wealth of contributions to decolonial thinking from African scholars, but also because even in African Studies, the contribution of African literature to decolonization is hardly emphasized, although it was researchers in literature who were among the foremost to critique the postcolonial condition in Africa (Zezeza, 1997).

In the following parts of the article, I examine what Maldonado-Torres (2011) calls the “decolonial turn”, emphasizing its heterogeneity and emergence in various geographical and epistemic sites (beyond Latin America), before progressing to discuss the literary turn, which I conceptualize as the contribution of African writers to decolonization/ decoloniality as read through the lens of three generations of African creative writers. In the conclusion of the article, I make a case for why African literature (and its contribution to African Studies) ought to be taken more seriously than is usually done, while also acknowledging that the various decolonial turns existing in various sites does not weaken the liberatory thrust of the decolonial turn.

The Decolonial Turn

According to Maldonado-Torres, the decolonial turn refers to “massive theoretical and epistemological breakthroughs in the works of Third World figures,” which serve as a counterpoint to the “colonizing turn” in Western thought (2011, p.p. 1–5). If, as Blaut (1993, p. 10) explains, the colonizing turn is Eurocentrism (otherwise known as “the colonizer’s model of the world”), then the decolonial turn entails struggles for epistemic freedom that aim at undoing/ reversing the work of the colonizing turn/ Eurocentrism (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021c).

However, considering the vast wealth of thought that serve as a counterpoint to the colonizing turn, it

is impossible to homogenize the decolonial turn. As Maldonado-Torres reminds us, it is heterogeneous, rather than a “single theoretical school” (2011, p. 2), a point which is accentuated by the metaphors used to describe the decolonial turn: a church/ a cocktail (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020a, p. 34); a family (Maldonado-Torres, 2011, p. 30); and an “umbrella” term under which a diversity of approaches gathers (Gallien, 2020, p. 37). This elucidation is useful particularly because of the tendency to (re)package contemporary decolonial discourses from Latin America as novel and (as a result) trace the genealogy of decoloniality from only Latin America. In “Postcolonial and Decolonial Dialogues”, for example, Bhambra (2014) attributes the genealogy of decoloniality to the “work of diasporic scholars from South America” (2014, p. 115), ignoring the colossal contributions of African intellectuals. A logical defence would be that Bhambra was not aware of the scholarship of these African scholars, but such defence is not as potent as it seems because it proves all the more “how scholars from Africa [especially those based in Africa] in particular experience epistemic injustice in the form of their work not being taken seriously and treated as though it does not exist at all” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021a, p. 168).¹

A more telling example involves Anibal Quijano, the Peruvian sociologist who is credited with having developed the concept of “coloniality of power” which has remained fundamental and influential in the fields of decolonial studies and critical theory. By “coloniality of power”, Quijano was referring to “the structures of power, control and hegemony that have emerged during the modernist era, the era of colonialism, which stretches from the conquest of the Americas to the present” (Makuvasa & Shizha, 2017). Though useful, these seemingly novel insights only echo the thoughts of radical Black thinkers such as Kwame Nkrumah and Amilcar Cabral, among others, whose works Quijano engaged with. Yet, in failing to “recognize the intellectual sources of his work”, Quijano practiced an “epistemic extractivism/ racism”, thus “giv[ing] the wrong impression that coloniality was his original idea”, thereby “concealing its origins in the Black Marxist tradition” (Grosfoguel, 2020, p. xviii).

¹ To be sure, African complicity should not be ignored. Tembo (2022), for example, has lamented the “uncritical import of concepts from Latin America that carry insights already endogenous to African intellectual history” (p. 40)

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African Contribution to Decolonial Thinking

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Of course, the attempt to equilibrate this case of epistemic injustice (i.e., of privileging Latin American scholarship on decolonial thinking) is also not a novel enterprise. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020b) has accounted for an “African genealogy of decoloniality” (p. 2) by foregrounding the salient but often-ignored contribution of African intellectuals such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, Samir Amin, Leopold Sedar Senghor and Kwame Nkrumah. More recently, he has also mapped out three major turns in African Studies: the colonizing turn, the nationalist/ Marxist turn, and the postcolonial turn—the latter two resisting the former (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021c). Leon Moosavi (2020) has also called for a rethinking of the genealogy of intellectual decolonization. Although he does not focus specifically on Africa, he argues that literature on decolonization from Latin America ought to be read harmoniously with those from Africa and Asia. These interventions are crucial because, among other things, they show—contrary to the claim of scholars such as Vambe and Khan (2013, p. 304)—that

the concept of the decolonial turn in Africa is not “another form of intellectual structural adjustment programme” (i.e., an alien theory imposed on Africa to explain its realities). Rather, the decolonial turn has long existed in Africa.

A Literary Turn in African Studies

In this article, I pose a slightly different question from Ndlovu-Gatsheni’s (2021). Rather than accounting generally for an African contribution to decolonial thinking, this article investigates specifically an African literary genealogy of decolonial thinking.² If truly “African writers were among the first to note that the emancipatory potential of independence had been overestimated” (Zeleza, 1997, p. 430), what has been the contribution of African literature to decolonial thinking? What have African literary figures understood as their task in decolonization/ decoloniality and how have they responded to it?

Recognizing the vastness of African literary production, I propose to answer these questions from the point of view of the concept of “generations”. It is true that this concept has been the subject of intense controversy ever since it was employed by Mkandiwire (1995) in his seminal article on “Three Generations of African Academics”. Although the debates are too vast to recount here,³ they have largely revolved around the fluidity of generational categorizations, since the concept gives the impression that humans (including their thoughts, ideas and experiences) can be put into rigid boxes. Still, I agree with scholars like Adesanmi and Dunton (2005), who explain that the generational approach remains one of the cornerstones of literary criticism largely due to the “possibilities it offers for a systematic understanding of literary trends and currents synchronically and diachronically” (p. 13).

Three generations of African literary writers have been acknowledged by scholars such as Adesanmi and Dunton (2005), Nnolim (2009) and Ojaide (2015).⁴

²The focus here is on literatures written in English. Of course, I am aware of the entry point of Ngũgĩ’s decolonial discourse (i.e., that African literatures are those written in African languages). However, following Maldonado-Torres (2011), this article is underpinned by a conception of decoloniality that embraces diverse patterns of thought. Thus, both Achebe and Ngugi’s position on the language debate, to me, are both decolonial, the difference being in the degree of radicality.

³For more on this point, see Garuba (2005)

⁴Again, these categorizations are not rigid. Other scholars have talked about a

fourth and fifth generation. This article is limited to the first three.

In the following section, I will provide vignettes of the decolonial contributions of each generation of African literary writers, making brief references to literary works that typify the dominant ideological dispositions of each generation: *Osiris Rising* by Ayi Kwei Armah (representing generation one), the Tambudzai trilogy (i.e., *Nervous Conditions*, *The Book of Not*, and *This Mournable Body*) by Tsitsi Dangarembga (representing generation two) and *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (representing generation three). The goal is to open spaces for further and deeper exploration of the contribution of African literature to decolonization/ decoloniality.

First-generation Writing

First-generation writers are comprised of writers such as Ayi Kwei Armah, Ama Ata Aidoo, Sembene Ousmane, Chinua Achebe, Amos Tutuola, Wole Soyinka, Flora Nwapa, Kofi Awoonor, and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, who were mostly born during the first five decades of the twentieth century when colonialism on the continent was rife (Adesanmi & Dunton, 2005). It is to this group of writers that Ashcroft et al. (2002) refer to in their discussion of the empire “writing back” to the imperial centre. As Singh (2017) correctly explains, “first-generation literature [was] an act of reclaiming voice, narrative autonomy and agency.” These (new) literatures were challenging dominant traditional literature in which “Africa...[was] always being defined...by Europeans who often saw the world in colour-tinted glasses” (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, 1993, p. 21).

Because first-generation African literature, from the onset, was chiefly about “writing back” to Europe—since “it was Europe which introduced into Africa the problems which the [African] writer was attempting to solve” (Achebe, 1976, p. 117)—the primary audience of this literature tended to be in Europe initially. Thus, the titles of some early African novels were taken from European poems. Also, certain first-generation works responded specifically to particular European novels.⁵

The preoccupation of engaging with Europe was mostly due to the aim of remedying Eurocentric portrayals of Africans as uncivilized and barbaric,

⁵For a more in-depth discussion of this, see Mukoma Wa Ngugi (2018).

and of Africa as the dark continent with no history. These writers were labouring at reinventing Africa. Collectively, first-generation literature is called “literature of testimony” (Harrow, 1994) and “literature of revolt” (Ngugi, 2018). Literature of testimony responded to derogatory representations of (and myths about) African culture by presenting a counter-discourse that valorised African culture. In that sense, this “literature of testimony” can also be referred to as “literature of cultural assertion” (Okonkwo, 1991), given that it documents the history of Africa from an African point of view (Harrow, 1994). By recapturing “the myth, folklore and the sum total of African cosmological perspective in their works”, first-generation writing, basking in a deep sense of African history, attempted to “make Africans regain confidence in themselves” (Osuafore, 2003)—a confidence that had been severely battered as a result of the colonial experience. Accordingly, these literatures tended to be set in (or featured key scenes from) the pre-colonial African past.

As literature of revolt, this literature also attacked racism and colonization. It presented Africans as actors, rather than people who were always acted on (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, 1981, p. 30). Choosing epistemic disobedience, this generation of writers gifted us with characters who embodied the spirit of resistance against forces of dehumanization. Famous among these characters are Okonkwo (from *Things Fall Apart*) and Ezeulu (in *Arrow of God*), who make their own history. Okonkwo, in particular, chooses to die through “suicide rather than submit and live in a world where he is denied the right to make his own history” (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, 1981, p. 30). Such writings were geared towards avowing the value of African cultures in order to stress the innate dignity of the African (Nnolim, 1989, p. 55).⁶

These writers, then, seriously engaged in a type of ameliorative historical revisionism. Unlike what is sometimes thought, historical revisionism does not imply an obsession/ fascination with the past as a golden age of peace and harmony. First-generation writers understood the primacy of the epistemic dimension of colonization⁷ and, consequently, that

⁶ Of course, Negritude—the self-affirmation of Blackness in a White world—is best read against this backdrop.

⁷ Both the colonizing and decolonizing turns have been underpinned by the control/ (re)interpretation of history.

decolonization would be shallow without “decolonizing the mind”, as Ngũgĩ (1986) puts it. This privileging of the epistemic dimension of decolonization animates Armah’s *Osiris Rising*.

Osiris Rising takes its narrative structure from Africa’s oldest source: the Isis-Osiris myth cycle. It is the story of Ast, an African-American, who after gaining her PhD in America, goes to Africa seeking both love and her heritage. She finds both in the person of Asar, who is at the forefront of an epistemic revolution. This revolution involves moving the centre of knowledge from Europe to Africa. Those who think Asar is a threat, as they find this idea repulsive, manage to kill him at the end of the novel. But if, indeed, the novel is based on the Isis-Osiris myth, then it is not wrong to conclude that Asar’s death, although seemingly anticlimactic, is the necessary catalyst to birth the revolution of which he is at the forefront.

Significantly, Armah’s characters unpack the inherent Eurocentrism of what is known as “History” and invite us to embed studies on Africa in a more subversive history, not as an “escapist indulgence” (Soyinka, 1997, p. 355) or as an obsession with/ deification/ idealization of the past as a golden age of peace, harmony and prosperity, but rather in acknowledgement that the production of knowledge has never been neutral (history with lower case ‘h’). *Osiris Rising* explores the intersection of ontology and epistemology, revealing how the epistemological base one assumes influences knowledge production—hinting at issues of cognitive/ epistemic (in)justice. From Armah’s perspective, historical revisionism is also imperative so that contemporary resistance to coloniality can find solidarity in historical precedents.

Part of Armah’s strategy to reconstruct African history includes a reassessment of the place of Egypt in Africa. References to Egypt abound in Armah’s creative and critical works. Armah’s fascination with Egyptology is seen not only in *Osiris Rising*, but also in his other creative works and critical essays. As imperfect though it is, it should be viewed as one of many quests by Africans for epistemic freedom, thus finding deep resonance with current scholarship on decoloniality. It seems that almost three decades ago, Armah had already decoded that decolonization, “at its deepest conceptualization”, “entails a re-writing of human history” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2020a, p. 10).

Second-generation Writing

Second-generation literatures criticize neo-colonialism and speak chiefly to the theme of disillusionment⁸, urging the reader to contemplate the real benefits of independence to African countries. As an online literary space succinctly puts it: “While the first generation writers were interested in challenging the images and stereotypes of [Africans] that were perpetuated during colonial rule, second generation writers wrote highly critical literature and seemed to be more concerned with contemporary [Africa]” (Bookshy, 2012). Thus, while first-generation writers had a more culturally restorative bent, second-generation writers were more national disposed.

Second-generation writers were also born during late colonial times; consequently, “their formative years were mostly shaped by independence and its aftermath of disillusionment and stasis” (Adesanmi & Dunton, 2005, p. 14). This generation of writers, convinced that first-generation writing had been overly occupied with explaining Africa to Europe, engaged more directly with Africa—usually by critiquing the postcolonial situation. Second-generation writers therefore include writers such as Niyi Osundare, Femi Osofisan, Tsitsi Dangarembga, Frank Chipasula, Tanure Ojaide, Isodore Okpewho, Nurudin Farar, Mandla Langa, Festus Iyayi, Jack Mapanje, Buchi Emecheta, Nawal El Saadawi and Ben Okri, most of whom arrived on the literary scene in the 1980s and 1990s (Adesanmi & Dunton, 2005). Moving away from the cultural nationalism/valorisation and historical revisionism that had shaped first-generation writing, these writers foregrounded the plight of the “poor masses in a society in which the oppressed and the oppressor, the exploiter and the exploited, share unequal and uneasy coexistence” (Nnolim, 1989, p. 58).

Dangarembga's *Tambudzai* trilogy is a textbook example of second-generation writing, which exposes the futility of thinking of decolonization in terms of the attainment of independence by African countries. Although the reader navigates their way from British colonial rule in Zimbabwe into the (period after the)

attainment of independence, we look for significant transitions in the lives of the characters in the novels in vain. Instead, an “oppressive sameness” (Gulick, 2020) pervades the life of Dangarembga's main character, ever-questioning the “post-ness” of post-coloniality⁹ by foregrounding continuities rather than ruptures between the supposedly colonial and post-colonial era. This point is foreshadowed in the titles of the novels. The first novel explores the “nervous conditions” of the characters while the second novel takes a more existential turn. As Saint (2020) argues, it is a quest for self, providing “an extended meditation on how colonial and postcolonial worlds affect the existential life of the colonized subject” (p. 450). The title of the last novel in the trilogy is no less foreboding: *This Mournable Body*—that is no less gloomy irrespective of the fact that Zimbabwe is now independent. These works “reject a national narrative that is premised on political independence as a moment of historical rupture” (Gulick, 2020, p. 466), proving more poignantly that which Grosfoguel (2007, p. 219) identified as “one of the most powerful myths of the twentieth century”—namely, “that the elimination of colonial administrations amounted to decolonisation of the world”—has long been a departure point for African literary figures.

Third-Generation Writing

This group of writers include Toyin Adewale, Lola Shoneyin, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Sefi Atta, Yvonne Vera, Calixthe Beyala, Amma Darko, Abdourahman Ali Waberi, and Chris Abani, representing, perhaps, the most diverse and eclectic group of writers in the history of Africa. Third-generation writers (especially those from Francophone Africa) are sometimes referred to as “children of the postcolony” to emphasize their severance from the colonial event (Adesanmi & Dunton, 2005). Easily detectable in the literature of the so-called third-generation writers is a preoccupation with the exploration of themes of “identity and otherness, as conditioned by their location in the diasporic and/ or exilic space” (Adesanmi, 2004, p. 236). Their works also emphasize “diasporic identity, migration, transnationality and globalization” (Krishnan, 2013,

⁸ This is not a distinctly second-generation characteristic. Some first (such as *A Man of the People*, *This Earth, My Brother*, *The Interpreters*, *Fragments* and *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*) and third-generation (such as *We Need New Names* and *Americanah*) writings are examples of the so-called literature of disillusionment.

⁹ The hyphenated post-colonial is used here as a time marker (i.e., the period after the attainment of political independence), rather than the unhyphenated postcolonial as a theoretical framework.

p. 74). According to Krishnan (2013), because third-generation writers are “displaced from the event of colonization and the turmoil of independence” and have been shaped more by “contemporary notions of cosmopolitanism, globalization, nomadism, and liminality than their predecessors”, their works have a “diminished concern with the colonial past” (p. 75). This also explains the reduced affinity with the nation-state.

Third-generation writing have therefore been indicted as being “so foreign and contrived that they fail to offer the kind of political dream that has always animated African writings” (Edoro, 2008, p. 25). This appraisal, it appears, is based on a faulty perception that every work of African literature has to match a certain type of engagement—usually meaning that of first-generation writers. In reality, third-generation writers have been posing the same questions as first (and second)-generation writers, except that they are proffering different answers that reflect their own realities (Edoro, 2008).

For example, Adichie has been grappling with issues of coloniality and identity. Not only has she been advocating for us all to be feminists, but she also analyses how racism continues to manifest in everyday interactions, albeit in subtler ways. Take *Americanah*, for example, which grapples with asymmetrical power relations in America based on skin colour within a context of a supposedly postracial world. The idea of postraciality is reinforced by concepts such as “colour-blindedness”, and discourses such as “all lives matter” (as a response to “Black Lives Matter”), and “the only race that matters is the human race” (as a denial of White privilege). Ifemelu’s (i.e., the protagonist in *Americanah*) polemic critique of postraciality reminds us of what Miranda Fricker (2007) calls “hermeneutic epistemic injustice”, which occurs when people experience “a gap in collective interpretive resources” because they are put “at an unfair disadvantage when it comes to making sense of their social experiences” (p. 1)—in this case, the viability of race as a useful analytical category for determining who gets what, how and when. At the same time, these third-generation literatures also deal with post-independence disillusionment in a similar manner that authors like Ayi Kwei Armah did in *The Beautiful Ones are Not Yet Born* back in the 1950s.

Conclusion

If, as Craig (1975) writes, “the course of literary development—its lulls, peaks, dying branches and new shoots—is determined by the main course of history” (p. 137), then it is also true that “the literature of Black Africa...[has been] mainly in response to the realities of colonialism” (Okonkwo, 1991, p. 41). These three generations of writers have been posing the same questions regarding coloniality in its multifaceted forms, but have been proffering different answers.¹⁰

At the same time, the point must be made that these generational categorizations do not necessarily imply disjointedness. In fact, each generation’s task, although peculiar, “is made possible only by the foundational work of those who have gone ahead” (Mwangola, 2008, p. 10). What these three generations of writers have in common is the redemptive thrust of their work. As Mwangola (2008) further explains, “stripped of the specificities of the particular debates, Africa’s intelligentsia has continued over different eras to respond more or less to the same core concerns” (p. 8).

Besides, the generational categorizations (although both epochal and thematic) themselves are very fluid. Although “temporal coequality and ideological preferences are at the centre of generational determination in modern African literatures” (Adesanmi & Dunton, 2005, p. 14), some leitmotifs (such as the disillusionment of independence) run through all three generations. It is also because of this fluidity that there arise challenges about locating specific African writers. For example, although I present Tsitsi Dangarembga as a second-generation writer, Gulick (2019) hints that she is a first-generation writer, while Adesanmi and Dunton (2005) classify her as a third-generation writer. In fact, Mukoma Wa Ngugi (2018) suggests that the so-called first-generation writers are better classified as the “Makerere generation”, given that the term “first-generation” excludes the work of South African writers (such as Samuel Mqhayi, Sol Plaatje, AC Jordan, Thomas Mofolo and RRR Dhlomo) who were writing in (South) African languages long before writers such as Achebe. This paper’s focus, however, is not as much on presenting

¹⁰ In fact, even within generations, writers usually disagreed on decolonial strategies. Perhaps, the most profound is as touching the divergent positions first-generation writers such as Ngūgĩ wa Thiong’o and Achebe took on the famous language debate.

a conclusive conceptualization of an old debate as much as it is on locating a decolonial turn within African literatures. The question of generations will remain open, requiring revisiting.

The fluidity among the various generations also means that writing for writing's sake has generally been a luxury too expensive for the African writer, regardless of which generation they belong to. Zeleza correctly clarifies that "writing in independent Africa has been a deadly serious business" (1997, p. 434). African writers have continued to serve as social critics, educators and part of the struggle against social evils. The idea that art needs no justification, should serve no purpose, should be judged purely on its own terms, rather than on its relationship to social, political or moral values has been dismissed by writers such as Achebe (1976), Ngũgĩ (1991) and Soyinka (1997), with Achebe's famous dismissal of "art for art's sake" as a "piece of deodorized dog shit" (1976, p. 25).¹¹ If for nothing at all, this should challenge us to give African literature a much more prominent place in social research than it is usually accorded (Adeoti, 2005).

The argument here has not been to discount the wealth of the Latin American contribution to decoloniality, nor to privilege African genealogies of decolonial thinking. After all, the value of anything cannot be merely reduced to its origin. The point, instead, is to make a case for the necessity of reading decolonial contributions from various geographical and epistemic sources in concert, in line with Maldonado-Torres' articulation of the decolonial turn. Thankfully, the diversity of the various turning points will not necessarily weaken the liberatory thrust of decoloniality, but will instead, as Ndlovu-Gatsheni explains, provide "the necessary nuances, complexity, depth and expansion" (2020a, p. 21).

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¹¹ This is true even beyond art. As Thuynsma 1998 explains: "Africanists have never been able to afford scholarship for its luxury. In whatever field, African intellectuals have had to work their way out from under a number of historical boulders rolled over us by foreign interests" (p.185).

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