Literature (1986); *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedom* (1993); and *Penpoints, Gunpoints, and Dreams: Towards a Critical Theory of the Arts and the State of Africa* (1998). *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary* (1981), written during his year under arrest, is a biographical reflection on his career and politics. Ngugi also has an international reputation as a novelist depicting twentieth-century Kenya; his best-known novels are *Weep Not, Child* (1964), *The River Between* (1965), and *A Grain of Wheat* (1967).

Published primarily in Africa, Taban lo Liyong is a prolific writer of poetry, short stories, and criticism. His most notable books in English are *The Last Word: Cultural Synthesism* (1969), the first book of literary criticism specifically focused on African literature, and *Fixions* (1968), a collection of short stories that contain elements of African oral tradition. Other works include *Eating Chiefs: Lwo Culture from Lolwe to Malkal* (1970), *Thirteen Offensives: Against Our Enemies* (1973), and *Meditations in Limbo* (1978). Henry Owuor-Anyumba's publications in English include a collection, *Kikuyu Folktales*, co-edited with Rose N. Gecau (1970); the monograph *A Musical Profile of Some Kalenjin Songs* (1973); and an article, "Contemporary Lyres in Eastern Africa," *African Musicology* 1 (1983).

There is a great deal of scholarship on Ngugi's work, especially his fiction. *Ngugi wă Thiong'o* (2000) by Oliver Lovesey provides biographical information as well as an overview of Ngugi's work. David Cook and Michael Okenimkpe's *Ngugi wă Thiong'o: An Exploration of His Writings* (1983), a survey, concludes with a chapter on his social criticism. *Ngugi wă Thiong'o: The Making of a Rebel: A Source Book in Kenyan Literature and Resistance*, edited by Carol Sicherman (1989), is a helpful reference work. Simon Gikandi, *Ngugi wă Thiong'o* (2000), is a useful comprehensive study. *Ngugi wă Thiong'o: A Bibliography of Primary and Secondary Works, 1957–1987*, compiled by Carol Sicherman (1991), offers a comprehensive bibliography. More recently, Lovesey's *Ngugi wă Thiong'o* contains a good bibliography. There is to date little criticism and bibliography on Liyong or Owuor-Anyumba.

On the Abolition of the English Department[1]

1. This is a comment on the paper presented by the Acting Head of the English Department at the University of Nairobi[2] to the 42nd meeting of the Arts Faculty Board on the 20th September, 1968.

2 (*a*) That paper was mainly concerned with possible developments within the Arts Faculty and their relationship with the English Department, particularly:

(i) The place of modern languages, especially French;
(ii) The place and role of the Department of English;
(iii) The emergence of a Department of Linguistics and Languages;
(iv) The place of African languages, especially Swahili.

(*b*) In connection with the above, the paper specifically suggested that a department of Linguistics and Languages, to be closely related to English, be established.

1. This debate resulted in the establishment of two departments: Languages and Literature. In both, African languages and literature were to form the core. In the case of the Literature Department, Caribbean and black American literature were to be emphasized. It thus represents a radical departure in the teaching of literature in Africa [Ngugi, Liyong, and Owuor-Anyumba's note].

2. A focal point of the political tension that continued to beset Kenya after independence was gained in 1964.

(c) A remote possibility of a Department of African literature, or alternatively, that of African literature and culture, was envisaged.

3. The paper raised important problems. It should have been the subject of a more involved debate and discussion, preceding the appointment of a committee with specific tasks, because it raises questions of value, direction and orientation.

4. For instance, the suggestions, as the paper itself admits, question the role and status of an English Department in an African situation and environment. To quote from his paper:

> The English Department has had a long history at this College and has built up a strong syllabus which by its study of the *historic continuity of a single culture throughout the period of emergence of the modern west*, makes it an important companion to History and to Philosophy and Religious Studies. However, *it is bound to become less 'British', more open to other writing in English (American, Caribbean, African, Commonwealth) and also to continental writing, for comparative purposes.*

5. Underlying the suggestions is a basic assumption that the English tradition and the emergence of the modern west is the central root of our consciousness and cultural heritage. Africa becomes an extension of the west, an attitude which, until a radical reassessment, used to dictate the teaching and organization of History in our University.[3] Hence, in fact, the assumed centrality of English Department, into which other cultures can be admitted from time to time, as fit subjects for study, or from which other satellite departments can spring as time and money allow. A small example is the current, rather apologetic attempt to smuggle African writing into an English syllabus in our three colleges.

6. Here then, is our main question: If there is need for a 'study of the historic continuity of a single culture', why can't this be African? Why can't African literature be at the centre so that we can view other cultures in relationship to it?

This is not mere rhetoric: already African writing, with the sister connections in the Caribbean and the Afro-American literatures, has played an important role in the African renaissance, and will become even more and more important with time and pressure of events. Just because for reasons of political expediency we have kept English as our official language, there is no need to substitute a study of English culture for our own. We reject the primacy of English literature and culture.

7. The aim, in short, should be to orientate ourselves towards placing Kenya, East Africa, and then Africa in the centre. All other things are to be considered in their relevance to our situation, and their contribution towards understanding ourselves.

8. We therefore suggest:

A. That the English Department be abolished;
B. That a Department of African Literature and Languages be set up in its place.

3. Then the University of East Africa with three constituent colleges at Makerere, Dar es Salaam, and Nairobi. Since then the three have become autonomous universities [Ngugi, Liyong, and Owuor: Anyumba's note]. Makerere is in Uganda; Dar es Salaam is the capital of Tanzania.

The primary duty of any literature department is to illuminate the spirit animating a people, to show how it meets new challenges, and to investigate possible areas of development and involvement.

In suggesting this name, we are not rejecting other cultural streams, especially the western stream. We are only clearly mapping out the directions and perspectives the study of culture and literature will inevitably take in an African university.

9. We know that European literatures constitute one source of influence on modern African literatures in English, French, and Portuguese; Swahili,[4] Arabic, and Asian literatures constitute another, an important source, especially here in East Africa; and the African tradition, a tradition as active and alive as ever, constitutes the third and the most significant. This is the stuff on which we grew up, and it is the base from which we make our cultural take-off into the world.

10. Languages and linguistics should be studied in the department because in literature we see the principles of languages and linguistics in action. Conversely, through knowledge of languages and linguistics we can get more from literature. For linguistics not to become eccentric, it should be studied in the Department of African Literature and Languages.

In addition to Swahili, French, and English, whenever feasible other languages such as Arabic, Hindustani, Kikuyu, Luo, Akamba,[5] etc., should be introduced into the syllabus as optional subjects.

11. On the literature side, the Department ought to offer roughly:

(a) The oral tradition, which is our primary root;
(b) Swahili literature (with Arabic and Asian literatures): this is another root, especially in East Africa;
(c) A selected course in European literature: yet another root;
(d) Modern African literature.

For the purposes of the Department, a knowledge of Swahili, English, and French should be compulsory. The largest body of writing by Africans is now written in the French language. Africans writing in the French language have also produced most of the best poems and novels. In fact it makes no sense to talk of modern African literature without French.

12. *The Oral Tradition*

The Oral tradition is rich and many-sided. In fact 'Africa is littered with Oral Literature'. But the art did not end yesterday; it is a living tradition. Even now there are songs being sung in political rallies, in churches, in night clubs by guitarists, by accordion players, by dancers, etc. Another point to be observed is the interlinked nature of art forms in traditional practice. Verbal forms are not always distinct from dance, music, etc. For example, in music there is close correspondence between verbal and melodic tones; in 'metrical lyrics' it has been observed that poetic text is inseparable from tune; and the 'folk tale' often bears an 'operatic' form, with sung refrain as an integral part. The distinction between prose and poetry is absent or very fluid.

Though tale, dance, song, myth, etc. can be performed for individual aes-

4. One of the official languages of Kenya and Tanzania.

5. Some of the diverse languages of the different ethnic groups in and around Kenya.

thetic enjoyment, they have other social purposes as well. Dance, for example, has been studied 'as symbolic expression of social reality reflecting and influencing the social, cultural and personality systems of which it is a part'. The oral tradition also comments on society because of its intimate relationship and involvement.

The study of the oral tradition at the University should therefore lead to a multi-disciplinary outlook: literature, music, linguistics, Sociology, Anthropology, History, Psychology, Religion, Philosophy. Secondly, its study can lead to fresh approaches by making it possible for the student to be familiar with art forms different in kind and historical development from Western literary forms. Spontaneity and liberty of communication inherent in oral transmission—openness to sounds, sights, rhythms, tones, in life and in the environment—are examples of traditional elements from which the student can draw. More specifically, his familiarity with oral literature could suggest new structures and techniques; and could foster attitudes of mind characterized by the willingness to experiment with new forms, so transcending 'fixed literary patterns' and what that implies—the preconceived ranking of art forms.

The study of the Oral Tradition would therefore supplement (not replace) courses in Modern African Literature. By discovering and proclaiming loyalty to indigenous values, the new literature would be on the one hand be set in the stream of history to which it belongs and so be better appreciated; and on the other be better able to embrace and assimilate other thoughts without losing its roots.

13. *Swahili Literature*

There is a large amount of oral and written classical Swahili Literature of high calibre. There is also a growing body of modern Swahili literature: both written and oral.

14. *European Literature*

Europe has influenced Africa, especially through English and French cultures. In our part of Africa there has been an over-concentration on the English side of European life. Even the French side, which is dominant in other countries of Africa, has not received the importance it deserves. We therefore urge for freedom of choice so that a more representative course can be drawn up. We see no reason why English literature should have priority over and above other European literatures where we are concerned. The Russian novel of the nineteenth century should and must be taught. Selections from American, German, and other European literatures should also be introduced. In other words English writings will be taught in their European context and only for their relevance to the East African perspective.

15. *Modern African Literature*

The case for the study of Modern African Literature is self-evident. Its possible scope would embrace:

(a) The African novel written in French and English;
(b) African poetry written in French and English, with relevant translations of works written by Africans in Portuguese and Spanish;
(c) The Caribbean novel and poetry: the Caribbean involvement with Africa can never be over-emphasized. A lot of writers from the West

Indies have often had Africa in mind. Their works have had a big impact on the African renaissance—in politics and literature. The poetry of Negritude[6] indeed cannot be understood without studying its Caribbean roots. We must also study Afro-American literature.

16. *Drama*

Since drama is an integral part of literature, as well as being its extension, various dramatic works should be studied as parts of the literature of the people under study. Courses in play-writing, play-acting, directing, lighting, costuming, etc. should be instituted.

17. *Relationship with other Departments*

From things already said in this paper, it is obvious that African Oral and Modern literatures cannot be fully understood without some understanding of social and political ideas in African history. For this, we propose that either with the help of other departments, or within the department, or both, courses on mutually relevant aspects of African thought be offered. For instance, an introductory course on African art—sculpture, painting—could be offered in co-operation with the Department of Design and Architecture.

18. The 3.1.1[7] should be abolished. We think an undergraduate should be exposed to as many general ideas as possible. Any specialization should come in a graduate school where more specialized courses can be offered.

19. In other words we envisage an active Graduate School will develop, which should be organized with such department as the Institute for Development studies.

20. *Conclusion*

One of the things which has been hindering a radical outlook in our study of literature in Africa is the question of literary excellence; that only works of undisputed literary excellence should be offered. (In this case it meant virtually the study of disputable 'peaks' of English literature.) The question of literary excellence implies a value judgment as to what is literary and what is excellence, and from whose point of view. For any group it is better to study representative works which mirror their society rather than to study a few isolated 'classics', either of their own or of a foreign culture.

To sum up, we have been trying all along to place values where they belong. We have argued the case for the abolition of the present Department of English in the College, and the establishment of a Department of African Literature and Languages. This is not a change of names only. We want to establish the centrality of Africa in the department. This, we have argued, is justifiable on various grounds, the most important one being that education is a means of knowledge about ourselves. Therefore, after we have examined ourselves, we radiate outwards and discover peoples and worlds around us. With Africa at the centre of things, not existing as an appendix or a satellite of other countries and literatures, things must be seen from the African perspective. The dominant object in that perspective is African literature, the major branch of African culture. Its roots go back to past African liter-

6. A literary movement of the 1930s through 1950s that began in Paris among black French-speaking African and Caribbean writers; protesting French colonist rule and assimilationist policies, they declared the value of black African identity, culture, and traditions.

7. This is a course for those who want to specialize in literature: 1st year—three subjects; 2d and 3d years—literature only [Ngugi, Liyong, and Owuor-Anyumba's note].

atures, European literatures, and Asian literatures. These can only be studied meaningfully in a Department of African Literature and Languages in an African University.

We ask that this paper be accepted in principle; we suggest that a representative committee be appointed to work out the details and harmonize the various suggestions into an administratively workable whole.

1968

TZVETAN TODOROV
b. 1939

A central figure in French structuralism, Tzvetan Todorov is best known for advocating the scientific study of narrative, modeled on linguistics, for which he coined the now-standard term *narratology*. He was responsible for renewing attention to the narrative theory put forth earlier in the twentieth century by the Russian formalists, such as BORIS EICHENBAUM and Viktor Shklovsky, and for an effort, with his mentor ROLAND BARTHES, to establish a universal "grammar" of narrative. In "Structural Analysis of Narrative" (1969), Todorov presents a condensed manifesto for the narratological approach.

Born in Bulgaria, Todorov emigrated to France in 1963 to study literature and language at University of Paris, where he did his doctoral dissertation under the direction of Barthes. Since 1968 he has held an appointment at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (National Center of Scientific Research) in Paris. His writing has been prolific and varied. From the late 1960s through the 1970s, he focused on questions of literary structure; he later turned to questions of interpretation and larger issues of contemporary culture.

The 1960s witnessed a flourishing of structuralism in fields as diverse as anthropology, psychology, philosophy, and literature. Influenced by FERDINAND DE SAUSSURE (1857–1913) as well as by contemporary linguists, structuralists applied the scientific model of linguistics to other aspects of human culture, seeking to chart their underlying structures and rules. For instance, fashion or courtship rituals might be seen as operating according to their own distinctive codes. The Saussurean model treats words and other minimal linguistic elements not as freestanding units but as components of a larger, abstract system; the overall system of language rather than individual speech utterances thus becomes the primary object of analysis. The anthropologist CLAUDE LÉVI-STRAUSS became famous for applying structuralist methods to the analysis of the myths and rituals of the primitive societies he observed, and his "Structural Analysis of Myth" (1958) provided an influential early example for work in literary studies. Defining literary study as one of the "human sciences" instead of a humanistic pursuit, structuralist critics aimed to describe and categorize the systematic operation of literature, whose general codes were exhibited and instantiated in individual literary works.

Encapsulating the tenets of Todorov's books *Grammaire du Décaméron* (1969, *Grammar of the Decameron*) and *Poetics of Prose* (1971; trans. 1977), "Structural Analysis of Narrative" seeks to develop a "poetics" or a theoretical study of literary techniques and categories. Todorov is quick to distinguish his version of structural analysis from the New Criticism, the predominant Anglo-American critical approach of the mid–twentieth century. While both focus on internal literary features of