

Nie, Pinge

Beijing Foreign Study University

Beijing, China

How Can the Masses Be Politicalised? – Re – examining Ngugi’s Linguistic Revolution

In Ngugi’s idea of linguistic politics and his linguistic practices, critics tend either to identify his decision to relinquish English in favour of Gikuyu as precisely that of tribalism, or to regard his writing in English as a failure in his resistance against the power of Western discourse. However, Ngugi’s linguistic revolution cannot be simply regarded as the binary opposition between African tribalism and the Western cultural imperialism. Rather, his linguistic revolution embraces twofold propositions. He uses the Western language as the link that binds the intelligentsia and the writer himself to work on the anti – colonial revolution, on the one hand; while to reach the masses directly and mobilise wider action of decolonization, he seeks to deprivilege the languages of the new elites with modes of communication more accessible to the general populace and to adopt a more overtly polemic style to politicise the masses, on the other. In the new millennium, there is a new hint in Ngugi’s linguistic revolution. He seeks to deconstruct the hierarchy of language and fight against the monolingualism, actualizing mutually cultural understanding between different centers, and the unite of “The Wretched of the Earth”. In this way, he attempts to establish the “Republic of man and works” where many languages and cultures coexist freely and equally, forming a cultural politics united in a utopia.