

Technology and African Literature

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Introduction

Africa has many literary productions today, and due to the current breed of new technologies and their devices, the way African literature is produced and received has tremendously changed. One can also notice the appearance of certain writings that break with academic style of literature as well as shortage of literary critics. These remarks, therefore, demonstrate the relationship between technology and African literature in a context that not only has technology impacted on different aspects of life, but has greatly influenced production and reception of African literature.

The word “technology” has its roots in a Greek word *techne* that means craft or making and *ology* that means an intellectual discourse or a system. Since literature is a creation, or making something new, it has a strong relationship with technology. African literature has adopted technology to keep with pressing needs of the time; the invention of various techniques in writing such as paper, ink, printing press, binding, or circulation have brought some changes. Various writers have either applied technology to produce their works or have made it the subject of such works, thus making technology the environment in which literature operates. However, the application of technology in African literature has brought about both positive and negative influence.

Positive Impact of Technology on African Literature

Publishing has been made possible by technology. Writing and publishing imaginative literature was not an easy task in the past. It was a laborious work for African writers, editors, and publishers; however, technology in recent times has made it quite easy and fast, for it has provided easy and fast communication channels which offer one-on-one relationships with the writers and readers.

Technology has offered a platform for African writers to reach readers and has enabled online publications which have received overwhelming responses. African writers should accept that a book can be available online through E-readers or mobile. The old idea that a publication means a printed book is quite absurd, for a publication is taking on a virtual form due to technology and its gadgets. The online publication of books is attracting a large number of readers due to good presentation. African writers should take much interest in the production and circulation of literature digitally through such giant technology players as Google, Amazon, or Apple. For instance, Amazon’s Kindle has an E-reader which has registered an overwhelming response from online readers. African writers such as the renowned Kenyan writer Paul Kipchumba have taken a step to list their works on these platforms.

In addition, technology and its devices have offered a unique platform for renowned authors as well as to common people to easily express their views and literary works by means of electronic media like blogs and social networking sites. Famous personalities are sharing their views with readers through blogs. This way technology has enabled the readers and writers to have a relationship and offer feedback, providing a healthy discussion about the reception and understanding of African literature.

Technology has made it possible for African writers to translate their works into many languages, widening their market reach. Translation faced several hurdles in the past due to non-availability of dictionaries, scarcity of reference materials, and limited resources. However, the process of translation has proven much easier due to technological advancements. There is availability of online translation resources and, more important, advanced machine translation using Artificial Intelligence. Also, this has created new jobs for writers, editors, and translators.

Finally, technology has enabled adaptation of African written literature into other forms such as movies. Most of the successful directors of Nollywood, Bollywood and Hollywood movies have drawn inspiration from literary pieces. Movie form widens the reach of African literature by appealing even to the illiterate.

The Negative Impact of Technology on African Literature

The hard realities of contemporary society are highlighted in literature and we can experience the trauma, confusion and despair that technology has caused, and is palpable in modern literature, especially fast spread of fake literature or literature of hate. Gugane asserts that “how we use technology is upon us. If we use it for destruction, it will bring holocaust as in the case of the two World Wars, where extensive use of information technology led to devastating loss of human lives and property” out of negative propaganda and distortion of the truth through literature. In Africa this is evident in colonial era, especially Apartheid in South Africa, where literature was used to advance racism and unnecessary hatred.

Conclusion

Technology is a contrasting force for African literature as seen in Roman poetry. Almost all classic literary texts have depicted technology as sinister and many Victorian, modern and post-modern writers have made technology the subject matter of their literature. Thus literature and technology have impacted each other. And whether literature will last or not is not a major issue, as imaginative literature has always remained an integral part of society despite changes in its production and reception: ‘The big Question in front of us is’, asks Bharat R Gugane, “In which form literature will last is uncertain?” But it's evident that the current Book Form will be replaced with Digital Form.’

Works Cited

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