

Whom Are We Publishing for in 2020?

Kakembo Yacobo Mugalaasi

(Uganda Martyrs University)

Remarks on the occasion of Kipchumba Foundation webinar *Thematic Transitions in African Literature, 1990-2020* on Thursday 19 December 2019, 15.00 GMT – 17.00 GMT

Early this year African writers met in Berlin to discuss ideas and to celebrate young African writers. I asked myself why and how we have failed to make grand investments to enable us to organize such forums in our own continent to directly influence our work and our people.

I realized that in-between the power of Knowledge acquisition and formation lies the discipline to write. Why is discipline such an important aspect for writing? Considering our values and environment, what are African writers changing after 2020 and whom are they publishing for?

"I write what I like," says Steve Biko, "Any suffering we experienced as Africans in early days was made much more real by songs and rhythm." With particular attention to the writers' environment we can critically understand the minds of the pioneer African writers and what they intended to preserve for the future. Heading into the 3rd decade of the 21st century our task should be that of gathering and preserving our indigenous knowledge, especially oral traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation. In addition, we should proactively create safe environments for storage, creative documentation, ease of access and consumption of this literature.

I know that technology has defined African literature in recent times, as we have witnessed a transition from colonial to post-colonial to digital literature, with the predominance of the social media. However, we still write in foreign languages for foreign audience. On the other hand, technology has been a boon because it has re-established the place of Africa's indigenous literatures by making it possible to shift from oral (word of mouth) to written to oral (recordings) forms.

However, the most important task that has eluded African writers is "creating our own writing platforms". The platforms that African writers write in space and time are controlled by the West, the Europeans to be specific. So, in my view, we should transition into our own platforms.

References

Biko, Steve. *I Write What I like: A Selection of His Writings*. Johannesburg: Picador Africa, 2004.

Museveni, Yoweri K. The Power of Knowledge. In Hamminga, B. (ed.), *Knowledge Cultures. Comparative Western and African Epistemology (Poznań Studies in the Philosophy of the Sciences and the Humanities, 88: 11-22)*. Amsterdam/ New York: Rodopi, 2005.

wa Thiong'o, Ngugi. The commitment of the Intellectual. *Review of African Political Economy*, 32 (1985, April): 18-24.