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ARTICLE

Literary Imaginations from Below: Crowdsourced Verse and African Literature's Digital Publics

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Abstract

What could be called a digital turn has amplified conversations around publics, literary cultures, and African literature's broadened genres. Drawing on conceptual frameworks and debates from literary, cultural, and media studies, Adeoba examines the literary imaginations and ekphrastic practices that emerge from the digital cultures of African Twitter users. Adeoba argues that crowdsourced verse demonstrates the creative agency of digitally connected everyday people and newer modes of sociality enabled by African poetry in digital contexts. Crowdsourced verse presents opportunities to examine the digital publics of African literature and their contributions to the body of literary works circulating in digital spaces.

Résumé

Ce que l'on pourrait appeler un tournant numérique a amplifié les conversations autour des publics, des cultures littéraires et des genres élargis de la littérature africaine. S'appuyant sur des cadres conceptuels et des débats issus des études littéraires, culturelles et médiatiques, Adeoba examine les imaginaires littéraires et les pratiques ekphrastiques qui émergent des cultures numériques des utilisateurs africains de Twitter. Adeoba soutient que la poésie participative démontre l'agence créative des personnes ordinaires connectées numériquement et les nouveaux modes de socialisation que la poésie africaine permet dans des contextes numériques. La poésie participative offre des occasions d'examiner les publics numériques de la littérature africaine et leurs contributions à l'ensemble des œuvres littéraires circulant dans les espaces numériques.

Resumo

Aquilo a que podemos chamar uma transformação digital alargou o diálogo acerca de públicos, culturas literárias e proliferação de géneros literários africanos. Partindo de

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enquadramentos conceptuais e de debates nas áreas da literatura, da cultura e dos estudos de *media* e comunicação, Adeoba analisa as imaginações literárias e as práticas ecfrácticas que emergem das culturas digitais dos utilizadores africanos do Twitter. Segundo Adeoba, a poesia nascida das massas revela a agência criativa das pessoas comuns digitalmente interligadas e os novos modos de sociabilidade que a poesia africana permite nos contextos digitais. A poesia nascida das massas abre oportunidades para examinar os públicos digitais da literatura africana e os seus contributos para o conjunto das obras literárias que circulam nos espaços digitais.

Keywords: crowdsourced verse; African poetry; everyday digital textuality; publics; Twitter/X; ekphrasis

The ongoing reinvigoration of African popular art forms by digital technologies extends to the literary field, manifesting itself, among other things, in poetic imaginations that materialize as crowdsourced verse. Scott Kushner has described such forms of digital textuality as being dominantly “bound up with the sociality of everyday life” (2015: 4). Crowdsourced verse produced on user-generated media like Twitter, the platform now called X, is illustrative of digital African literatures or African literary texts that circulate in online spaces. This circulatory dimension and the authorial affordances of digital platforms offer views of how, in James Yékú’s words, “digital technologies reformulate the form, function, and audience of African literature” (2019: 1). Yékú’s notion of reformulation is proximate to Kushner’s (2015) reasonings around forms of textuality embedded in everyday digital cultures—including texts produced and circulated on social media networks, phone services, and weblogs—and the possibilities they offer toward interrogating and reimagining the work of literature, the nature of literary texts, and what we consider the object of study of literary criticism. This essay reflects on everyday digital textuality and its interface with more traditional poetic forms through an examination of crowdsourced poems that emerge from the digital cultures of African digital media users, particularly on X—a platform I refer to in this essay as Twitter, its former name, in line with my illustrative materials’ date range (2020–2022) and the platform’s operational configurations then. Drawing on conventions developed by ekphrastic poetry, crowdsourced verse, I argue, demonstrates the creative agency of digitally connected everyday people and newer modes of sociality enabled by African poetry in the context of new media technologies. The texts thus present opportunities to examine the expanded contemporary publics of African literature and their contributions to the body of literary works circulating in a digitally networked age. These poetry texts are in fact paradigmatic of networked art, in Patrick Jagoda’s sense, and uncover the writerly impulses of media users in the African digital space (Jagoda 2016). They demonstrate some of the creative and aesthetic responses digital subjects are making to the authorial power of social media platforms, a participatory aspect of the social web that remains crucial despite data capitalism and media companies’ commodification of data and digital labor through their use of platforms as a business model (Srnicek 2017).[1] The forms of sociality foregrounded in these crowdsourced poems and their rhizomatic links matter even if—or in part because—they emerge from a digital space embedded in late capitalism.

My interest in forms of sociality afforded by crowdsourced verse informs a methodological approach that closely considers not only poems but also the "interpretations, reception, judgements, and uses to which readers subject poems," as well as the "roles and meanings of different poems and types of poetry as points within larger social relationships" (Harrington 2002: 4). Hence, my analytical framework incorporates perspectives from multiple fields, including literary studies and cultural studies, to read tweets (Figure 1) as social media, cultural, and literary texts that illuminate the new digital genres of African poetry and the imbrications of creative writing and visual popular culture on social media platforms.

In online ekphrastic practices that continue and redefine a long tradition of ekphrasis in poetry—whereby poems invoke and describe a visual object, historically an art object—the phrase "Any poet on the timeline?" is one mode of convoking a public with writerly agency. The phrase points toward a collaborative production of meaning; it draws on and signifies the dialogic and participatory nature of the social web and its disruption of normative understandings of authorship. In the poem represented in Figure 1, the original poster uses the phrase and the accompanying imperative, "do your thing," to reaffirm the centrality of everyday digital subjects on the timeline to the decentered process of producing crowdsourced verse online. In other words, the ekphrastic practice and its participatory network of readers and respondents demonstrate "how audiences make the meaning of the text 'whole' by what they bring to it" (Barber 2007: 137). This dialogic process aside, the use of the image in the example also illustrates a form of digital appropriation that recalls the work of Matthias Krings on "how people in Africa appropriate and make meaning out of foreign life-worlds" (2015: 7). The image is a foreign media content remediated to prompt poetic texts and textual forms that articulate the local interpretations of responders, as "kayamata"—a Hausa language word used to describe local aphrodisiacs and love spells—in the last line of the poem suggests:

> Sitting in my corner reasoning the matter
> How could she drag me into the light
> Though I struggled with all might
> Realized I was behaving like a man in a jar
> That's when I realized she use kayamata

In five lines characterized by shifting tenses, @Naked_Wire007's speaker reflects on the impact of such love spells. Beyond the lexical choice in the final line, the sonic resonance of this quintain (the internal rhyme in the first line, for instance) is equally significant. Together, the image and the lines aptly illustrate the ekphrastic poetry practices visible in everyday digital culture. More broadly, the decontextualization of visual texts in this digital practice refigures the scope and meaning of ekphrasis.

In W.J.T. Mitchell's reasoning, ekphrasis is a literary genre in itself, albeit minor (1994, 152). For Elizabeth Loizeaux, ekphrasis is both text—"the poem that addresses a work of art"—and practice, a perspective that is affirmed in the

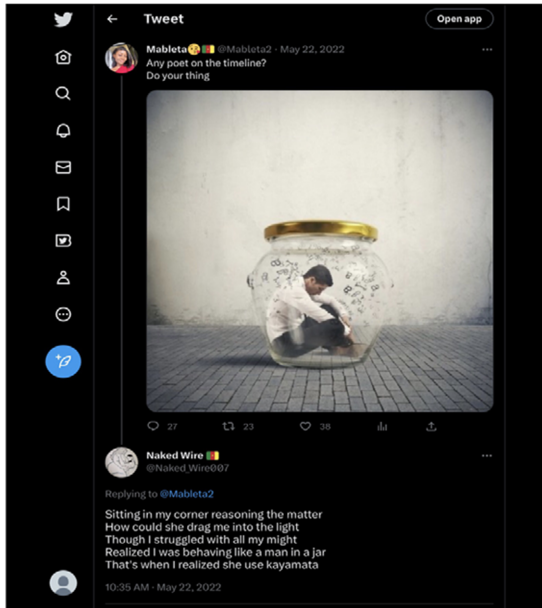

Figure 1. A screenshot of @Mableta2’s prompt and @Naked_Wire007’s response. https://twitter.com/Naked_Wire007/status/1528399090345619456.

context of crowdsourced verse, although the range of visual texts, including video clips, that animate the poems “complicate in interesting ways the ekphrastic trope of stillness” (2008: 1, 27). Crowdsourced verse as a product of ekphrastic practices amplifies the participatory logic of the social web and African digital subjects’ collaborative meaning-making. The poems function as one of the textual means through which everyday netizens perform their subjectivities and make their capacity for self-representation legible in online communication. To be sure, important questions about the existence of a digital divide and its intersections with class politics arise from inquiries focused on the online practices of Africans in the social media ecology. Yet such concerns need not foreclose necessary attention to the artistic productions and practices of the digitally connected.[2] Thus, in a digitally networked age, engaging and repurposing the tools of literary studies in evaluating poetry crowdsourced on Twitter is one way we can pay critical attention to spaces that are relevant to textual creation and reception in contemporary life (Kushner 2015).

This essay contributes to the growing body of scholarship alert to the impact and intersections of poetry with everyday life (Chasar 2012). Poetry crowdsourced on social media platforms highlights the epistemic value of online commentaries and responses and the terrain they open toward interrogating the category of the literary and the work of literature. Signaled, for instance, by the macaronic aesthetic and compositional methods that draw on and transcend ekphrastic conventions, the generic indiscipline of crowdsourced verse and its

participatory publics make online ekphrastic practices discursively generative in the context of "the genres and anti-genres that elaborate postcolonial African experience" (Jaji and Saint 2017: 152). I begin by examining scholarly perspectives on the participatory publics of African literature across media and genres as well as the interpretive approach that technologically mediated poetry texts, such as crowdsourced verse, invite. In the subsequent sections, I situate crowdsourced verse within the discourse of what constitutes the popular in African literary and cultural studies, one that has been amplified by proliferating art forms and new, wide-ranging perspectives, as in the case of the critical works in the *Routledge Handbook of African Popular Culture* edited by Grace A. Musila (2022). I undertake a textual analysis of crowdsourced verse to demonstrate the aesthetic significance, intersections with everyday social and cultural forms, and the purposes for which readers and contributors deploy poems. The attention ekphrastic practices receive from social media influencers and content creators, for instance, marks the circulation of poetry in economies of influence as well as its use for the politics and performance of visibility online (Yékú 2022a). In the final section of this essay, I stress the relevance of crowdsourced verse as an example of what we might call literary imaginations from below—texts, practices, and aesthetic forms often outside the purview of mainstream literary establishment, discourse, and histories—while highlighting the discursive possibilities of African cultural forms, such as the comic skits of Instagram comedians and performers, for literary studies.

A Genealogy of Participatory Publics

My sense of *publics*, as I use the concept in this essay, is informed by Karin Barber, who developed it in her foreword to a 2014 volume on popular culture in Africa in which she builds on Mikhail Bakhtin's work on addressivity. In an essay on speech genres, Bakhtin notes an utterance's addressivity, its "quality of turning to someone," as one of its most important attributes and a basis for its existence (1986: 99). Barber develops this formulation, employing an approach that is comparable with a generative version of the term she offered in an earlier text, *The Anthropology of Texts, Persons and Publics* (2007: 139–40). In the 2014 essay, she elaborates:

> "publics," that is, audiences not necessarily co-present with the author/performer, anonymous audiences of indeterminate but imaginably vast extent. The emergence of publics is not a mere by-product of the availability of print and media technology. Publics are actively imagined, constituted through particular new forms of address embedded in every new genre. But publics are also in some sense an empirical reality—people who watch, read, discuss, interpret the cultural forms that cross their paths. (2014: xxi)

In the context of African literary studies, what we might call a digital turn has amplified the conversations around publics while inaugurating new ones on digital literary cultures and the broadened genres of African literature.[3] Yékú,

for instance, suggests that “with digital publics, there is a more engaged, assertive network of participatory audience of African literature” (2019: 7). This “participation” enabled by digital affordances reflects a broadened form of engagement beyond those (watch, read, discuss, interpret) highlighted by Barber.

A view of audience participation based on digital affordances is legible in Shola Adenekan’s pioneering work *African Literature in the Digital Age* (2021). What he describes as the “internetting” of African literature explains how new media technologies remap conceptions of contemporary African literature. Adenekan’s critical reflections on the participatory praxis of digital publics illuminate the way readers of African poetry “partake in the creative process” by offering editorial interventions on the works African writers publish on social media platforms and in listservs (2021: 55). The authorial tendencies of these digital publics and their active contributions to digital African literatures are also the focus of works such as Yékú’s article on Kiru Taye’s online fan fiction “Thighs Fell Apart” (2016). As he makes clear, the democratizing affordances of digital media enabled the Nigerian writer to “re-narrate” the sexual life of the characters in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart.* For Yékú, online fan fiction consolidates readers’ agency and enables them to disassemble and reassemble the textual spaces and meaning of literary texts (2016: 4). Yet online fan fiction as a digital practice privileges an authorial paradigm dependent on existing literary texts that, in turn, enable the “possible ‘writerly’ intervention of the reader” (2016: 1). Hence, it is arguable that it offers a limited view of the publics’ contributions to digital African literary texts or the kinds of texts that the interactive affordances of digital media technologies enable them to produce. That said, online fan fiction importantly illustrates “the new kinds of responses readers are bringing to African literature in a digital age” and offers a crucial reminder about readers’ contributory praxis (2016: 6). This is an idea that also figures prominently in Tsitsi Jaji’s more recent work that uses a comparative approach to examine the diverse reading publics of African poetry across print and digital contexts (2020).

Jaji tracks the way audiences of African poetry “exert friction on the categories of elite, traditional, and popular” and explores the circumstances—including media and publication forms—under which written African poetry might be considered popular (2020: 71). Importantly, then, she situates her discussion of African poetry within literary studies and popular culture studies, two fields in which, she notes, it has been relatively marginal (2020: 70). Like Yékú, she is interested in the contributory praxis of the publics of African literature, highlighting, for instance, the poetry publication opportunities that Francophone African magazine *Bingo*’s correspondence section offered its readers in the late fifties (2020: 73). Within the scope of digital African literatures, what Jaji suggests as “participatory” is less about the production of literary texts, as her example of audience responses to the shortlist of an African poetry prize shows.[4] But she offers us a broader genealogy of the contributory publics of African literature beyond the digital media space. Thus, there is an intimation that the digital is only one node in the genealogy of the participatory or contributory praxis of the publics of African literature across media contexts. As Rita Nnodim

notes in her important work on Ewi ("Yoruba Neotraditional Media Poetry"), for instance, fan letters from listeners and readers of the poetry genre often contained their poetry samples and commentaries on the works of their favorite poets (2002: 308–22). The example of crowdsourced verse offered in this essay, therefore, builds on and is situated within this long history and scholarship.

But crowdsourced verse also invites an interpretive approach which texts that emerge from other participatory or contributory contexts might not require. In his article concerned with approaches to reading poems published in African-run digital literary magazines, Nathan Suhr-Sytsma asks: "How might digital formats challenge our habitual interpretive priorities?" (2021: 2). Proximate to Jaji's (2014) theorization on "sheen reading" and interested in the reception of technologically mediated poems, what Suhr-Sytsma conceptualizes as "screen reading" illustrates how such texts urge a modification in the normative interpretive practices and analytical frameworks that poetry attracts within African literary scholarship (2021: 6). The visual assimilation of texts, illustrations, and typefaces required in "sheen reading" is comparable to "screen reading" (Jaji 2014: 116–17), especially on social media networks like Twitter and its assemblage of multiple media forms. Sheen reading's attention to "forms of sensory experience, choice, and intermedial association that connect a wide range of texts" is particularly generative in the context of crowdsourced verse, emerging from a digital practice that merges text, images, and sometimes sound (2014: 146). These poems reveal how literary expressions afforded by digital media potentially require modes of evaluation beyond those attracted by printed text.

Ekphrastic Poetry Practices on Twitter

The generic affiliations and textual codification of crowdsourced verse, "the materiality of texts and some of the common procedures by which they can be assembled from everyday textual ingredients," invite reflections on the often-slippery idea of the "popular" (Barber 2007: 204). With a focus on poetry, Susan B.A. Somers-Willett appraises the popular by focusing on what she notes as institutional resistance (2009). Hence, what she calls "popular verse" relies on a mode of identification that is not based on style but on how such poetry "performs an attitude of resistance to a dominant literary elite" given to exclusivity (2009: 40). Her view shares resonances with the ideas expressed in Barber's pioneering work in African popular culture (1987). Barber asserts that popular arts in Africa "flourish without encouragement or recognition from official cultural bodies, and sometimes in defiance of them" (1987: 1). Popular art forms "play a crucial role in formulating new ways of looking at things," she notes (1987: 4). Following Barber, other scholars have offered approaches to the "popular" in an African context. In her introduction to the *Routledge Handbook of African Popular Culture*, Musila, for instance, imagines "the popular as a way of accessing and understanding culture and society" (2022: 1). From the perspective of literature, the "popular," Stephanie Newell suggests, "is notoriously difficult to define in African contexts." Her point stems from how "the category is not inherent in the material, and texts are not necessarily written to be 'popular'" (Newell 2011: 1013). Potential alternatives to

"popular" that she highlighted but with their limitations include "locally published" and "public" (2011: 1016). Ultimately, Newell submits:

> What African 'popular' literature shares is its dynamic capacity to absorb local and global influences. In the field of literary production, this capacity is likely to expand in new directions in the future as authors gain increasing access to internet technologies and perhaps lose the need for the book as a textual commodity. (2011: 1020)

This view is affirmed and illustrated in Stephanie Bosch Santana's (2018) work on African digital fiction and Mike Maphoto's fictional online diary, *Diary of a Zulu Girl.* Maphoto, Santana tells us, "took a genre—the nonfiction online diary—that was gaining currency in South Africa and made a few changes that turned it into a new, viable form of popular literature" (2018: 193). Building on these ranging and sometimes overlapping perspectives, one approach to the popular that I follow in this essay proceeds from how the online ekphrastic poetry practices from which crowdsourced poetic texts emerge are rooted in the everyday digital cultures of Africans on social media platforms (Ligaga 2012). Crowdsourced verse is comparable with popular art forms that circulate in African digital spaces and are enabled by the affordances of digital media technologies.

In a digital context, affordance frames the "actions motivated or constrained by the design, interface, and structure of social media platforms that urge digital actors to respond in particular ways and encounter technology inventively" (Yékú 2022a: 8). In other words, the structure of digital media technologies—the brevity of Twitter, for instance—can configure and constrain textual forms, aesthetics, and the consumption of texts. Aside from the important notion of constraint, there is also a reminder that there are different platforms and, as such, varying affordances. Crowdsourced verse, in this regard, reflects the functional design of Twitter, a platform that seems apt for online ekphrastic poetry practices. The poetic imaginations of African digital subjects on Twitter illustrate poetry's "typical concision" and the fact that it can be reproduced and "composed more quickly than long-form fiction" (Suhr-Sytsma 2017: 10; Sacks 2020). But Yékú's notion of constraint, extended to include an algorithmic sense, is equally important in the context of broader online poetry practices and perhaps stresses a necessary reminder about having a nonromanticizing view of digital media platforms despite the authorial possibilities they embed.

Twitter glitches and algorithmic configurations, for example, potentially have implications for the visibility of participants in the ekphrastic practices, their literary contributions, and the circulation and reception of their texts and commentaries. Twitter algorithms rank content and shape the level of engagement posts receive. It is also possible to encounter missing prompts and responses, even beyond instances where the participating Twitter users make their accounts private or limit their tweets to selected viewers. Having said that, the discursive meanings of the online ekphrastic poetry practices are more central in this essay.

A crucial aspect of the ekphrastic practice hinges on original posters who solicit creative responses, in the form of poetic texts, to a still image or a video

they tweet to the timeline. An accompanying verbal text—often the expression "Any poet on the timeline?"—functions as the primary mode through which the original posters convoke their publics or hail new media users in African digital spaces as potential writers with the capacity to produce creative texts and meanings. The original posters' rhetorical strategies are also suggestive of poetry's popularity. This is pertinent since some consider poetry to be elitist and beyond the purview of everyday people. In any case, rather than signal a policed category, the original posters' use of "poet" in the verbal texts that attend the image-prompts is open-ended. Similar accompanying verbal texts include "Any Poet in the house?," "where are the poets?," and "Poets in the building," among others. These expressions play a dual role because they contain what we can describe as "the expectation of a response" (Barber 2007: 138). They convene publics around the tweets while also articulating the original poster's implicit invitation that these publics respond, in the form of poetry, to the still image or video. In some instances, the original posters offer an interpretation that might guide the respondents' contribution or offer a context for the shared image or video. They also rely on their respondents' networks, as signaled by follow-up tweets that encourage respondents to "tag a poet."

Hence, some of the respondents tag users they know to be writers or who might be interested in offering creative responses to the prompts. To be clear, economic interests and the "marketization of online prestige and fame" undergird the actions of some of the original posters, who are self-described social media influencers or content creators (Yékú 2022a: 225). It is thus possible to argue that their interests lie partly in creating "texts that arrest attention and increase patronage," as suggested by the follow-up "please, don't forget to follow me" tweets (Yékú 2022a: 225). Some original posters in this category also advertise products in the follow-up tweets. Poetry is, therefore, a means of convening an audience for their products. But these commercial underpinnings, what Mike Chasar might call "the commodification and for-profit use of poetry," need not foreclose an interest in the creative possibilities that their broader practices enable (2012: 288). The original posters' marketplace and capitalist logic can, in fact, point us to the capacities and use of poetry in a digital age as well as its interface with the user-generated signifying elements of digital culture.

The use of hashtags, for instance, is significant in how original posters convene publics in ekphratic practices on Twitter. They include hashtags that reference topics and events trending either globally or in the countries where they are located. In the case of @AfolabiAdegbemi's tweet (Figure 2), for example, the location stamp puts the poster in Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria. The trending phrases and hashtags he added to his prompt include "Cristiano Ronaldo" and "Nigerian Navy." An implication of this approach to the use of hashtags and trending topics is that one can infer some of the original posters' nationalities or countries of residence without looking through their profiles, especially in cases where their names or the emoji flags in their handles are not suggestive of their nationalities. More importantly, ekphrastic poetry practices in African digital spaces stage a consistent dialogue between the global and the local, as the example of the hashtags in @AfolabiAdegbemi's tweet shows. The then-trending topic "Cristiano Ronaldo," the name of a global soccer star, is deployed in the same

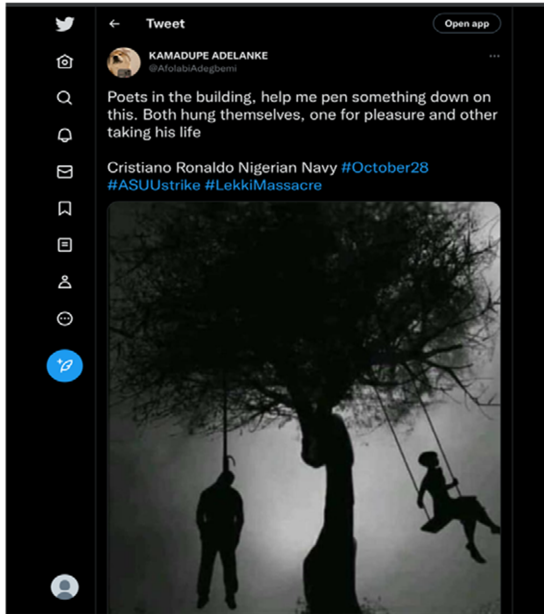

Figure 2. A screenshot of @AfolabiAdegbemi's prompt. https://twitter.com/AfolabiAdegbemi/status/1579495083363422211.

tweet as #ASUUstrike, which is a hashtag that denotes the local interest of social media users concerned with the industrial action of academic staff in Nigerian government-owned universities.

The global-local interaction is sometimes more pronounced in the range of visual texts—drawn from multiple sources and contexts—that function as prompts for the contributory publics. Some of the original posters use images that illustrate the flow of global media content and how they are adapted to reflect the creative interests of everyday people. Krings's (2015) point that appropriations are not monolithic in form—an image might be remediated in diverse contexts—is particularly apt in the context of these ekphrastic poetry practices on Twitter. In the practices, images that "entered transnational media circuits" are "interpreted, reworked, and adapted" to signify and articulate local interests (2015: 2). Crowdsourced verse, in other words, exemplifies one of the creative ways through which global cultural forms and media content are localized for literary expressions, though this form of appropriation is not limited to the original posters.

Several respondents equally deploy images and memes in their contributions, thereby expanding the visual field within which the tweets and image-prompts they respond to are situated. In this regard, the use of images in the responses affirms the first of the "three phases or moments of realization" Mitchell identifies in "the problem of ekphrasis" (1994: 152). What he calls "ekphrastic indifference" captures the "realization" that words cannot represent images. "Words can 'cite,' but never 'sight' their objects," Mitchell tells us (1994: 152). In the context of digital

cultures, the use of images in ekphrastic poetry practices and the contributory responses is consistent with the cultural and visual logic of digital media platforms. While some respond with only images, other respondents merge verbal texts and images in their contributions. Their use of hashtags also differs from how original posters use them to convene the publics. The hashtags that respondents use are similar to those deployed by writing communities on Twitter. In this instance, they use hashtags to signal their affiliation with "communities organized around a shared investment in the language of poetry," as Susanna Sacks aptly puts it (2020: 243). Hashtags, in other words, enable those participating in ekphrastic poetry practices to situate their responses within a broader context and the online interactions of a digital creative community. Some ambivalent or antagonistic conceptions of hashtags emerge based on the temporal aspect—the short life span of many trending hashtags and topics. In any case, this should not obscure the potentiality of hashtags and the literary expressions of digital subjects who deploy them.

Crowdsourced Verse and the Question of Aesthetics

As Suhr-Sytsma notes in the context of new media poetry, the prevailing critical tendency in African literary studies to see poetry texts "primarily as politics by other means"—from colonial critique to a textual performance of protest focused on despotic systems of governance—conceals the discursive possibilities of African poetry. It "does only partial justice to what African poetry," in its diverse forms, can offer, he makes clear (2021: 2). Thus, in his reading of new media poetry or poetry appearing in digital format, he reads for the lyric and models "screen reading." Drawing on Sule Egya's work, he approaches "recent poetry not only as 'a site for verbal action against oppressive regimes' but also as a player in emergent institutions and a portal to alternate temporalities" (2021: 2). Suhr-Sytsma's caution is crucial, especially since the separation African literary studies makes "between the aesthetic and the sociopolitical," resulting in "an uneasy neglect of the former and a dutiful privileging of the latter," often leaves "both experimental and popular (not to mention popular experimental) work on the margins of the field" (Jaji and Saint 2017: 152). That said, some of the texts that emerge from ekphrastic poetry practices in African digital spaces boldly signpost the social realities of the non-digital worlds inhabited by their producers. They signify Barber's argument that texts are reflexive and function as social facts: "texts are commentaries upon, and interpretations of, social facts. They are part of social reality but they also take up an attitude to social reality" (2007: 4). Hence, some crowdsourced poems point toward both the social realities that inform their emergence and the (non) affective factors influencing their producers' aesthetic choices. For instance, the image-prompt (see Figure 3) tweeted by @KobbyMorant attracted Ghanaian, Kenyan, Nigerian, and South African respondents. Although some respondents wrote poetic texts with thematic interests other than politics and governance, many considered the prompt an opportunity to write poems that denounce the political corruption and profligate culture of the ruling class in their respective countries.

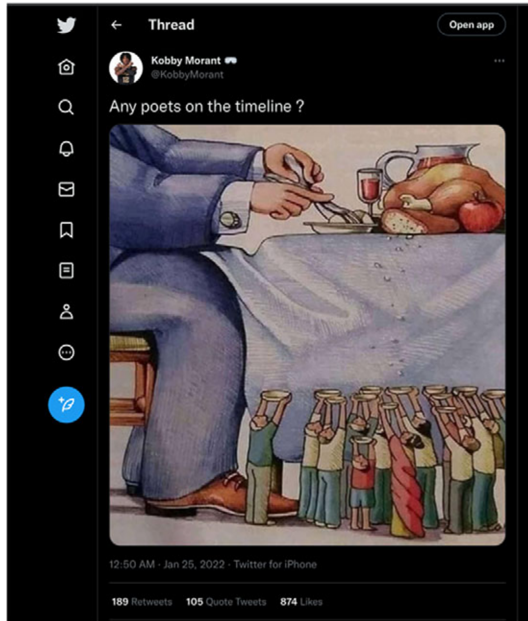

Figure 3. A screenshot of @KobbyMorant’s prompt. https://twitter.com/KobbyMorant/status/1485867672755744477.

It is, of course, possible to argue that @KobbyMorant’s prompt lends itself readily to the kind of class and politics-themed commentaries provided by the respondents. But contributors equally made politics-themed responses to several images whose visual rhetoric differs from the one embedded in @KobbyMorant’s prompt. Below, for instance, is a quatrain with straightforward syntax and marked sonic and syllabic congruity (the first three lines) that @Sirfreshsemi wrote in response to @Kizento_’s prompt (see Figure 4). The emphatic length of his final line and the forcefulness of all the lines are equally notable:

> The river is sad
> The country is sad
> Buhari is mad
> The children deserve to swim in clean water

Although he responds partially to the image-prompt (evident in the first and second parallel lines) his interest is equally in a world aside from the one illustrated by the image. For him, the blame for the state of the river, the country (Nigeria), and children’s inability to swim in clean water lies at the feet of Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari. His poetic response, in other words, localizes the image to articulate his political views and critique of state power.

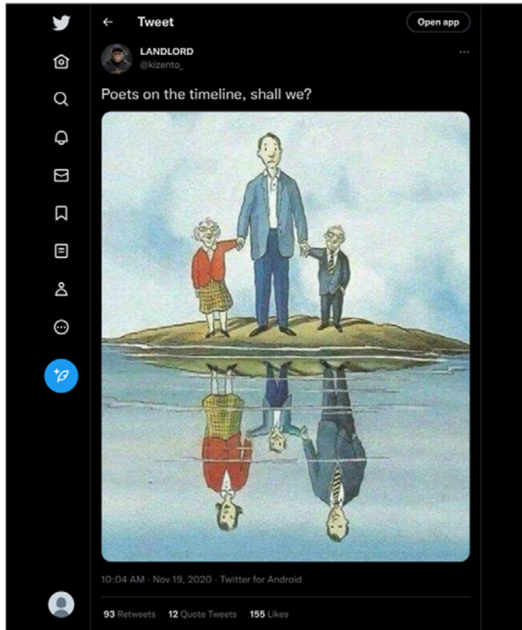

Figure 4. A screenshot of @Kizento_'s prompt. https://twitter.com/kizento_/status/1329455503148261376.

@stan_feelings's contribution—a poem characterized by contractions, rhymes, and a seeming preference for monosyllabic words—is comparable:

> u wnted poetry
> you didnt tell us d mood
> bt i am in an eatery
> so I write b4 my food
> I choose d tone
> cz of my zone
> its dusk b4 d dawn
> Naija pulling me down, I yawn
> i pray for better days ahead
> If our leaders cn use their heads
> Many youths dead
> with no tombstone over their heads

His poem is self-reflexive—indexed by the metapoetic gesture of the first two lines: while he appears to concede some of his creative agency to the original poster by suggesting that more verbal guidance could have been provided, the attention he calls to "mood" and "tone" is important and signposts his reasonings on poetic composition. By using the plural pronoun "us" in the second line before shifting to the singular first-person pronoun "I," a shuttle "between

private and public, stated and implied address," @stan_feelings rearticulates the notion of collaborative authorship in the ekphrastic practice and emphasizes the participatory network of readers and respondents (Suhr-Sytsma 2017: 183). Ultimately, he intimates that his subjectivities and the affective landscape of his poem are informed by his country of residence.

Thus, although he didn't use the hashtag #EndSARS, the latter part of the poem appears to allude to the October 2020 protests against the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) unit of the Nigerian police force and police brutality in Nigeria. The last two lines, in particular, are potentially references to the unarmed protesters who were killed across the nation during demonstrations. The poem was written about a month after the protests. The digital expressions of resistance in this poem and @Sirfreshsemi's illustrate a mode of performative citizenship online, what Yékú theorizes as cultural netizenship, even if his focus is primarily on visual cultural texts like cartoons, videos, and pictures: "various aesthetic-cultural articulations of internet speech and subjectivities that regulate the performance of self in everyday digital life" (2022a: 231). Social media, Yékú tells us, "congeals the production of new imaginative expressions and digital genres that shape and are shaped by a repressive postcolonial state" (2022a: 3). Participating in online ekphrastic poetry practices, when situated within the ambit of these respondents' political agency, thus functions for them as a mode of self-representation and a terrain for participatory politics.

Humor, to be sure, exists as a subtext even in crowdsourced lines of verse that articulate their producers' views on public affairs and state power. More broadly, the literary imaginations of media users participating in online ekphrastic practices often stage comic narratives and quotidian experiences. They demonstrate what Adenekan, following the works of Barber and Keguro Macharia, describes as the aesthetics of the quotidian, in which writers place "ordinary Africans doing ordinary things at the very core of creative writing" (2021: 144). While his point concerns the acts of established and emerging Kenyan and Nigerian writers who deploy digital media technologies towards the circulation of their poetry texts, it is equally apt in the case of ekphrastic poetry practices on Twitter, where netizens situate poetry within the ambit of aesthetic forms and artistic productions that signify their everyday realities while also marking the digital space as a domain of play (Yékú 2022a).

Hence, participants' intertextual literary expressions rehearse and contribute to humorous commentaries that animate African digital spaces. They make references to expressions from popular art forms and to everyday events that circulate on social media platforms. For instance, in one of the responses to the earlier example of @AfolabiAdegbemi's image-prompt that depicts a woman on a tree swing and a dead man hanging unnecessary from the same tree (see Figure 2), @ddaannywest opts for a short contribution articulated in Yoruba instead of writing a poem: "shora fun obinrin Oluwa awa pelue," which could mean "beware of women. May the Lord be with you." In this instance, the respondent invokes a statement made by a street preacher who was the subject of a video clip that circulated on Nigerian digital spaces in 2021. In the video, the preacher shares an evangelism tract with a man who is not visible and admonishes him, in Yoruba, to be wary of women. For @ddaannywest, the preacher's

statement appears to be the best creative response to @AfolabiAdegbemi's image of the two possible lovers—one, a woman, is on a tree swing and having fun, while the man is dead and hangs unnecessary from a rope. It can be argued that the visual rhetoric of @AfolabiAdegbemi's image and the preliminary interpretation he offered set the tone for a particular kind of response. But, as some of the comments indicate, there are contributors like @brighthakid who asserted their creative agency and wrote poems that did not rely on @AfolabiAdegbemi's prompt, thus conveying their poetic interpretation of the image:

> Being a child is easy
> Growing up is hard
> For adults cute is seen as cheesy
> And for kids the difference is worlds apart.

@brighthakid stands out in his cross-rhymed quatrain that stresses the difference age and experience make in perceptions about life and how this, in turn, informs choices. One possible interpretive position his contribution might elicit is that, for him, the image illustrates innocence and the protective veil of childhood, which shields one from adult decisions that are not always exciting. He thus suggests that the depicted man's death hinges on the responsibilities and challenges that proceed from being an adult.

What Akin Adesokan (2011) conceptualizes as the "aesthetics of exhortation" in the context of African cinematic practices can illuminate the ideologies and aesthetic choices adopted by these respondents in their authorial practices. As he frames it, aesthetics of exhortation describes the "West African tradition of aesthetic populism" that sees morality as primal in the order of thematic values and judges impact based on the didactic utility of works of art or the extent to which the audience can draw examples and moral values from a text (2011: 82). This notion is displayed, for example, in @ddaannywest's short response to @AfolabiAdegbemi's prompt (see Figure 2), even if in a playful tone: "shora fun obinrin Oluwa awa pelue," (Beware of women. May the Lord be with you). It is equally affirmed in @sashamillibaby's interpretation of the same image:

> One swings full of joy and life
> The other swings in sadness and grieve
> Mind you they are both in the same three
> But different branches
> Everything will come to a stop
> One leaves and the other stays
> Life is like this tree
> It's hold it hold both sides
> Wat we choose is wat we get

In these multiply alliterated lines with shifting tenses, repeated use of copulas, and recursive sounds, @sashamillibaby appears to partly respond to both the image and the preliminary, guiding interpretation that @AfolabiAdegbemi

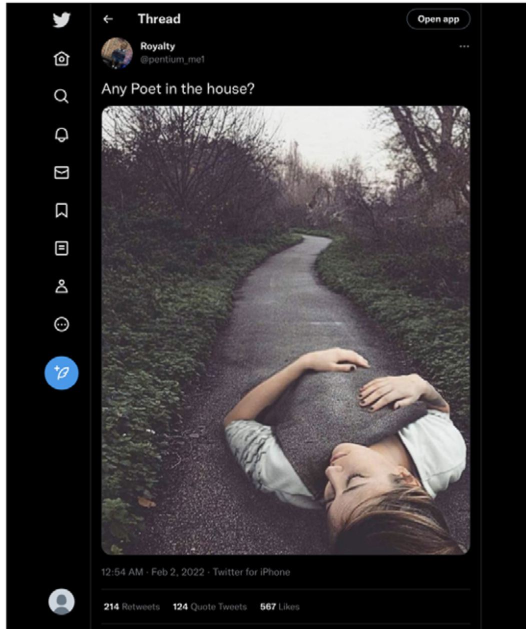

Figure 5. A screenshot of @Pentium_me1’s prompt. https://twitter.com/pentium_me1/status/1488767759907438593.

offered. But the contribution is also distinct in its focus on “life,” which is thus the subject of the exhortatory lines of verse that embed a contrastive tenor in the early part but become emphatic in the last line. The shifting address of the poem is equally pertinent. It enables @sashamillibaby to make others the subject of her exhortation rather than a self-addressed reflection primarily. In the final line of the poem, the indeterminate mode of address becomes complex through the change to “we.” The pronoun then situates @sashamillibaby within the group her exhortation on life addresses. This mode of address also enables a textual configuration of publics beyond those on the timeline or the geographical origin of both the original poster and the respondents. Based on @sashamillibaby’s “we,” then, the subject of this poetic exhortation on life can be any human.

Although Twitter has since added a feature that enables users to edit their tweets, the typographical errors in @sashamillibaby’s creative response and her recourse to contracted words underline several ways in which the structure of a digital platform can both shape and constrain the form of a literary expression and users’ authorial choices. Twitter’s then-limit of 140 characters is telling in this regard. Equally illustrated in her example is the tension between the platform’s promise of immediacy and the possibility of revision. No doubt these aspects of textual clarity and revision will vary based on the digital platform and whether the respondent’s contribution is spontaneous or composed online rather than copied from a texting app on their mobile device.

In another example, we encounter a Caucasian woman lying on a tarred road that also serves as a blanket (see Figure 5). Unlike @AfolabiAdegbemi, @Pentium_me1, the original poster, did not offer respondents any guiding interpretation. Yet the post received high engagement, as the numbers of likes, retweets, and quote tweets indicate, and attracted a broad demography of respondents with varying approaches. One of the responses, a single-line contribution by @Bqmbulu, appears to allude to the title of Nigerian-British writer Ben Okri's notable novel *The Famished Road*: "On this famished road, some 'slip' to death while 'sleeping.'" In another response to the image-prompt, @sirgmajor, who identifies as a journalist and songwriter in his Twitter bio, ended his contribution with the hashtag #wannabepoet. In this regard, his contribution stages the performance of authorship while also signposting his aspiration to the rank of a class he appears to see as exclusive. Affirming his aspiration, he later quotes the contribution and adds: "Poet in the making lol."

@Dagentle_, who describes himself in his Twitter bio as a writer and content creator, among other things, is another respondent to @Pentium_me1's prompt (Figure 5), and his contribution that narrates a successful journey to "the promise land" has the highest number of retweets. Aside from the way his contribution resonated with readers, the circulatory dimension is also important in the context of online ekphrastic practices since "creative capacities are engaged not only when people compose, improvise or write new texts, but also when they read, listen, repeat or remember them" (Barber 2007: 210). Like @Dagentle_, two other respondents, @Milade_Rhed from Nigeria and @Lungstagangasta from South Africa, identify as writers in their Twitter bio. They equally stand out in their contributions that take the form of enjambed couplets, although from different perspectives, signaled not least by their tone and modes of address:

> The road is my home
> My only place of abode
>
> I journey miles and miles
> That I know not my house
>
> The turns and the curves,
> Are like a mystery to solve
>
> A mystery that I love
> Is my place of abode
> (@Milade_Rhed)
>
> --
>
> She dreamt of roses and violets
> But she attracted pain like a magnet
>
> Now there's nowhere to go
> Cause she's roadbeat
> (@Lungstagangasta)

In @Milade_Rhed's contribution, she appears to be more interested in the notions of space and ceaseless crossings. Her second couplet embeds what Jonathan Culler might call the lyric present. "I journey" is an occurrence that

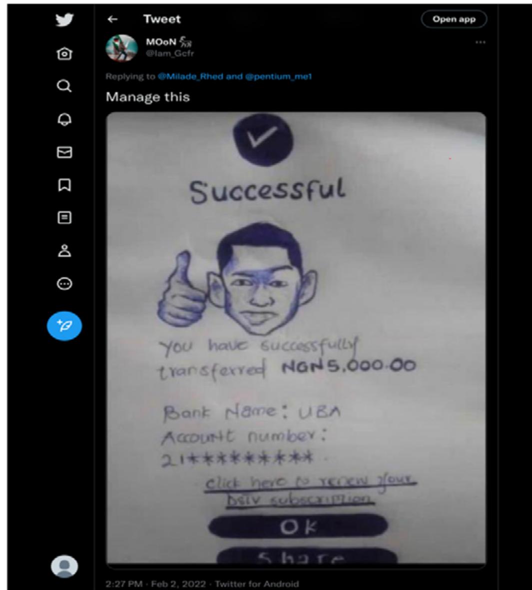

Figure 6. A screenshot of the reward @Iam_Gcfr offered. https://twitter.com/Iam_Gcfr/status/1488972368471076874.

doesn’t present a temporal specification. Rather it exemplifies an “unmarked, nonprogressive present tense” (Culler 2015: 289). Also, the interiority that her speaker’s dramatic monologue foregrounds is heightened by “mystery” in the latter part. Hence, her poem reads like overheard speech. @Lungstagangasta’s poem, on the other hand, builds on semantic contrasts, and in the last line, his speaker adopts a casual speech style that is nonetheless emphatic. Unlike @Dagentle_’s speaker who celebrates their arrival at “the promise land,” @Lungstagangasta suggests that the image-prompt frames a sense of immobility that arises from unfulfilled expectations. More importantly, his contribution elicited an exchange between him and @Pentium_me1, the original poster, that is illuminating. @Pentium_me1 made an appreciative reference (“‘The roadbeat’ Word”) to the poem’s last word that brings “deadbeat” to mind. “It’s a new word!” @Lungstagangasta replied. This exchange, among others, reflects both the original posters and contributors’ perception of the online ekphrastic practice as a space for varied poetic innovations, even as they entextualize and remix textual forms and images.

Beyond likes and retweets—which are forms of social currency—original posters, contributors, and readers have other ways of prizing crowdsourced verse. The comments attracted by @Milade_Rhed’s contribution offer one example. A reader, @Iam_Gcfr, offered @Milade_Rhed a faux monetary reward in the form of a bank transfer (see Figure 6). Another reader, @Ceasarmud, commented and offered the same amount, adding an emoji that denotes Dollar banknotes: “Take this 5K fr lunch.” Although there is a playful sense to these dialogic exchanges and modes of prizing the poems, they are significant in the way they

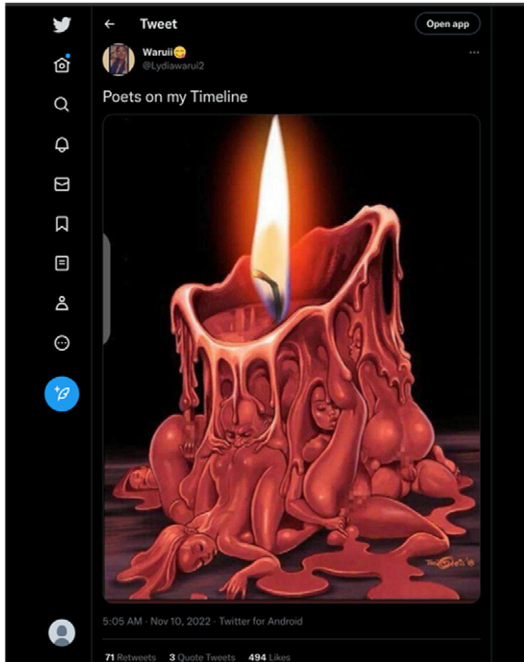

Figure 7. A screenshot of @Lydiawarui2's prompt. https://twitter.com/Lydiawarui2/status/1590661833681428480.

underline perceptions of value—both for poetry and respondents' contributions specifically—that the comments and emojis seek to convey. The perceptions of value are, of course, not always positive. Some contributions and comments engender conversations on the literariness or aesthetic qualities of the crowd-sourced verse. This is illustrated, for instance, by an exchange between a contributor @MadQueenLady and a reader @sir_atua. In response to @Pentium_me1's prompt (Figure 5), @MadQueenLady wrote a poem infused with syntactic replications, repeated cadences, and pararhymes:

> I see the road
> The road sees me
> I become the road
> The road becomes me
> My journey is mine
> This road is mine
> As I let the journey decide
> Through the journey I am defined

Her contribution has been retweeted once and liked thirty-five times, suggesting that some digital subjects potentially asserted its literary value. But for @sir_atua, who conveyed his perception in a playful way marked by his use of

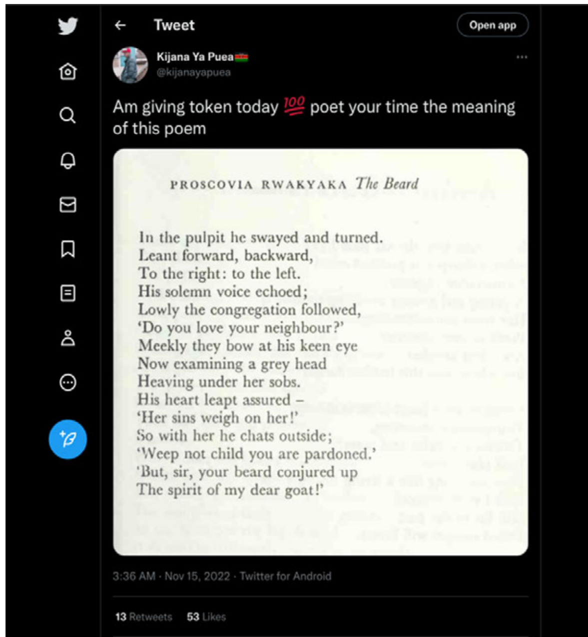

Figure 8. A screenshot of @Kijanayapuea’s prompt. https://twitter.com/kijanayapuea/media.

laughter emojis, the contribution hardly passes for poetry: “Poem not kindergarten song.” His position is perhaps informed by how the first two lines and their lexical substitution (“road” for “moon”) recall a portion of an old English nursery rhyme: “I see the moon and the moon sees me / God bless the moon and God bless me.” “It’s not for everyone,” @MadQueenLady countered. “The first two lines were a playful intro into a deeper premise,” she added. In this way, she reaffirms her creative agency and capacity for self-presentation online. She also subverts what might have been perceived as a gatekeeping tendency on @sir_atua’s part.

The rejection of an exclusionary logic, although in a different tenor, is equally demonstrated in the contributions to another prompt (see Figure 7). Responding to @Lydiawarui2’s image-prompt of a melting candle that denotes sexual encounters between male and female figures, @Kijanayapuea, a fellow Kenyan who describes himself as a “Verified content creator,” noted: “Am not a poet but i can write.” His assertion is consistent with the caveats that precede the contributions made by some of the digital subjects who participate in the ekphrastic poetry practices online. Rather than aspire toward a writerly identity, as in the case of @sirgmajor in a previous example, @Kijanayapuea’s assertion stresses how belonging to the class of “poets” or “writers” is not necessary for the expression of literary imaginations online or a condition for participating in a collaborative production of meaning. @Kijanayapuea himself convenes literary

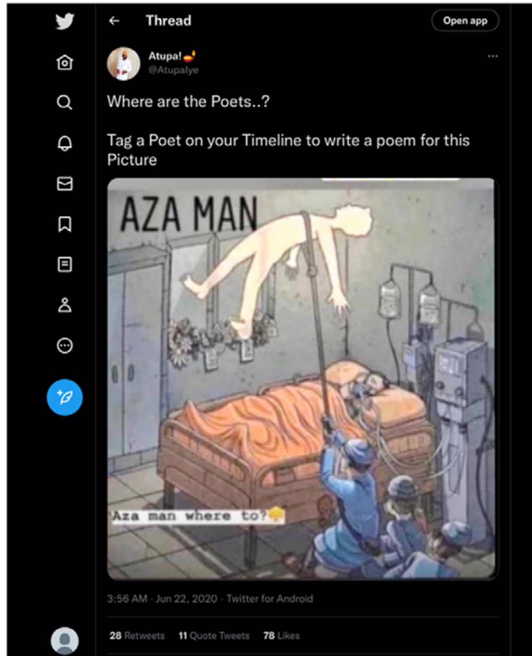

Figure 9. A screenshot of @Atupalye's prompt. https://twitter.com/Atupalye/status/1274989633823178754.

publics on Twitter and crowdsources readers' perspectives on poetry (see Figure 8). The poem he used in his tweet presents a humorous encounter between a priest and a parishioner and is by the Ugandan poet Proscovia Rwakyaka; it is one of her two poems included in the anthology *Poems from East Africa*, edited by David Cook and David Rubadiri in 1971. One can see in @Kijanayapuea's tweet an overlap between print and digital textualities. His tweet instances how media users remediate "the aesthetics of the printed book" and the way such remediations of print texts can be "a form of social practice" (Cohn 2016: 78, 194). As the responses to the tweet suggest, @Kijanayapuea seems to rely on the popularity the source-anthology enjoys among students in East Africa who have encountered the poem in their national curricula. Also, although the address of his tweet appears to be open-ended, insofar as it invites anyone interested in poetry, the reward he offers is specific to Kenya. That said, his example is important for what it shows about one of the ways African digital subjects deploy poetry within global digital cultures and online creative economies that are sometimes intended to capture financial gain from the participants. Following the rebranding from Twitter to X, the platform, for instance, introduced an ads revenue-sharing program that offers monetary rewards to creators with high engagement, adding another layer to online ekphrastic practices' imbrication with digital capitalism.

Multilingual Forms and Linguistic Ecologies

Whether as readers or contributors, the media users who participate in creative online practices like ekphrastic poetry call necessary attention to the linguistic ecologies of African cultural forms that circulate in the digital space. In one instance, Nigerian poet Adedayo Agarau (@adedayo_agarau) commented on a respondent’s contribution to an image-prompt with high engagement. Though on a playful note, @adedayo_agarau’s comment—“Àgbà Poet!” (A poet marked by competence or advanced skills)—signals an affirmative gesture by a more recognized writer while also signposting the diversity of the publics convened by the digital practice. More importantly, @adedayo_agarau’s comment is consistent with many respondents’ rhetorical strategies. They infuse expressions and indigenous aesthetics that circulate in African popular culture forms, illustrating what Tosin Gbogi has described as “slangifying” (2016). This use of “youth-focused language whose potential meanings are hard to determine by members who do not share in the hip hop culture” animates their literary expressions and the performance of youth identities online (2016: 177). Signaled not least by code-mixing as well as intralingual and interlingual code-switching, the multilingual dimension of the responses is equally crucial, as several examples show. For instance, below is @iamgoddyTR’s contribution to an image-prompt that depicts a Black man dressed in a suit and standing before a mirror. The mirror doesn’t show that his apparel is torn at the rear:

> ma hyɛ me Suit
> m’abɔ me tie me
> nim facey me mirror
> me wɔ mirror ni nam
> me kyi mpa cos
> m’enim na ekyirɛ mirror ne nim
> Awurade me Suit no ati ti

@iamgoddyTR contributes in Akan language and code-mixes; his poem is characterized by self-reflection and embeds lexical repetitions. The multilingual paradigm that his poem instances is equally visible in users’ engagement with an image-prompt in which a cowboy engaged in a sexual act with a woman shoots an approaching, flower-bearing man in the head. The poetic responses are in multiple languages, including Swahili, French, Nigerian pidgin English, and Cameroonian pidgin English.

One variation of the pidgin Englishes can be seen in another example foregrounding the linguistic multiplicity that marks the digital practice and the participants’ contributory praxis. In @AtupaIye’s image-prompt (see Figure 9), we encounter a dead man whose departing spirit is being drawn back by medical personnel who have tethered it with a rope. This example is important for several reasons, including the way the expression (“Aza man where to?”) and an emoji inscribed on the image stress the remix logic of global internet cultures (Lessig 2008). The first two words (meaning “rich man”) in the inscribed expression are a localizing gesture in themselves. In the poetic response @Paschalkhris

made in Nigerian pidgin English, a dramatic monologue articulated by a dead man, the speaker laments that he is unable to exert vengeance on his killers since he is held back by the medical personnel:

> I die
> You no gree my spirit leave my body
> How I go take find the people wey kill me now?
> Leave me make I go
> But no forget to bury me with cutlass
> Make I hunt my killers

The sonic and lexical emphasis enacted by the break between the poem's first and second lines is noteworthy, the same with the penultimate and final lines. The poem's rhetoric equally embodies African beliefs about death and the afterlife. But like the "slangifying" strategies, the linguistic framework that privileges multiple languages—as in the case of the examples above—suggests that some of the literary expressions articulated by contributors might make little or no meaning to readers without the linguistic capacity to understand them. Yet this aspect of the ekphrastic practices animates the creative agency of the participants while also signposting the linguistic range of their online literary imaginations. African digital subjects' ekphrastic practices bring the linguistic ecologies of online spaces and their aesthetics into focus and pluralize the range of languages centered in digital African literatures and aesthetic forms.

The contributory publics' code-mixing and code-switching strategies demonstrate what Helen Vendler and Jahan Ramazani, within the ambit of postcolonial and global poetics, describe as a macaronic aesthetic. This interlingual aesthetic is indeed significant in the context of the generic indiscipline that marks crowdsourced verse. As Ramazani reminds us, "one reason poets bring code-switching into the culturally prestigious discourse of poetry is to legitimize such interlingual speech" (2020: 195). The choice of code-mixing and code-switching strategies in crowdsourced verse, in other words, is an act that unsettles a monolingual, often Anglocentric verse culture. Through these literary strategies and the use of indigenous languages and pidgin Englishes, the participants eschew hierarchizing comparisons between "local and global indexicalities, low and high culture" in a digital practice caught between literature and popular culture (Fasan 2015: 13).

Conclusion: In Praise of the Popular

In what Doseline Kiguru (2022), Madhu Krishnan (2022), and others have noted as the celebrity capital of some globally recognized African authors and literary administrators—discernible, in part, in their high media visibility—one node of the intersections between African literature and popular culture becomes readable. Although Adenekan's *African Literature in the Digital Age* does not pursue the performative aspects of African writers' online interactions, his analysis (the example of Chimamanda Adichie's Instagram video in his introductory chapter,

for instance) affirms this imbrication of the popular and the literary (2021: 1). I have argued in this essay that the literary expressions of African digital subjects who participate in ekphrastic poetry practices present a different example of such interrelations. Crowdsourced verse brings literary imaginations from below and the authorial power of digitally connected everyday people into view. These ekphrastic practices on Twitter are rooted in the everyday digital cultures of media users and “the creativity of obscure people” (Barber 2007: viii). But, as evinced by the literariness of the texts that emerge from them, they register literary dimensions of critical importance. Crowdsourced verse refigures the category of the literary. The texts’ materiality and worldliness illustrate how “starting from everyday creativity and quotidian acts of entextualisation” can enable us “to widen our field of vision to include forms, genres and generative processes often overlooked or excluded when the object of study is ‘literature’ conventionally defined” (Barber 2007: 212). Equally crucial is what the texts reveal about the contributory praxis of the publics of African literature and the implications for digital African literatures and African aesthetic forms that circulate on the internet. As the diversity of the respondents suggests, Adenekan’s point that “readers of literature posted online and publishers of online literary publications are also most likely to be members of the educated middle class,” for instance, is not necessarily the case with crowdsourced verse (2021: 8).[5] Not only are people from across social classes present in African online spaces and participating in digital cultures, but some contributions to the online ekphrastic practices also encode social mobility issues and class logics, as in the case of responses to Figure 3, for instance.[6]

Indeed, crowdsourced verse in African digital spaces is a prominent product of what Kushner might call a form of digital textuality that is “bound up in the sociality of everyday life” (2015: 4). Yet the convergence of the producers and respondents, who are from various countries of the continent, also mirrors the “sociality of anthologies,” as Scott Challener succinctly puts it (2019: 9). Crowdsourced verse, in this regard, recalls established literary projects that bring African poets together. The practice brings to mind projects such as *20.35 Africa*, an annual electronic anthology of African poetry edited by Ebenezer Agu, and the African Poetry Book Fund’s New-Generation African Poets chapbook series, edited by Kwame Dawes and Chris Abani. Hence, a critical outlook that fixates on popular poetry as low art—as though “popularity and artistic merit are mutually exclusive”—is untenable (Somers-Willet 2009: 22). To disregard such practices would be to forgo discursive opportunities that might be generative for African literary studies.

More broadly, the literary expressions that figure in proliferating digital media-enabled popular forms such as comedy skits potentially present objects of study for literary scholars. For instance, Nigerian comedian and actor Lasisi Elenu (Nosa Afolabi; @lasisielenu), who has over four million followers on Instagram, is notable for his comic skits that circulate across digital platforms. One of the comedic genres he produces concerns poetry and is the basis for a Nigerian Twitter user @zas_leo’s assertion: “Even Lasisi is a poetry genius.”[7] Dr. Bankole, Lasisi’s character in the poetry skits, hosts imaginary poetry slams and a literary event called “Poetry has done it for me,” where he performs his

spoken word poetry to an audience of listeners and fellow poets. Hashtags that accompany these comedic videos on Twitter include #poems, #poetryisnotdead, and #poetrycommunity. The video skits and the varied comments they attract across social media platforms offer one perspective on the power, value, and capacities of poetry in the digital age (Chasar 2020). More importantly, Lasisi's video skits, like the crowdsourced verse produced by the contributory publics of African literature, further open new horizons for African poetry's social affordances and reveal everyday people's understandings of poetry.

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Notes

1. For a broader discussion of the politics of datafication and its implications in the context of digital literary cultures in Africa, see Yékú's "Digital African Literatures and the Coloniality of Data" (2022b). He offers a necessary caution against the romanticization of digital platforms or the notion that digital connectivity and technology's promise of access are not at a cost.
2. See Yékú's elaborate discussion of the new digital subaltern and digital divide (2022a: 23–28).
3. For more on audience and (digital) publics in the context of African literary and cultural studies, see Barber (1997), Yékú (2019), and Warner (2020).
4. "Reading in the volatile digital environment of icons—smile, heart, wow—retweets, and sometimes caustic commentary" is equally "a spectacularly participatory activity," she makes clear (Jaji 2020: 88).
5. His point is in the context of Nigeria and Kenya. For more on class relations in African digital spaces, see Adenekan (2021) and Yékú (2022a).
6. Also, respondents' everyday realities sometimes inform their contributions and the understandings they bring to the practice, as @16Fanboy0's response to Figure 5 reveals: "Bros Biko life hard allow us think and remember how to make money don't try to over heat our brain Biko let's just view in peace."
7. https://twitter.com/zas_leo/status/1352295565967687682.

   His claim was in response to a tweet by Adedayo Agarau, in which Agarau noted that Nigeria has "fabulous poets" and urged "Nigerian folks" to read them. https://twitter.com/adedayo_agarau/status/1352163520729722882

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