"Dear Africa/You have many narratives" Emerging forms of e-literature beyond the South African Novel

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Abstract

Over the past several decades, there has been increasing interest in South African literature. While prominent South African literary novels have rightly been celebrated by international critics and readers in recent years, such texts are rarely considered in tandem with the innovative digital works that are also being produced in the region. These digital works have evolved in response to immense shifts in literary production and publication, resulting in exciting new forms of literature that speak directly to the #FeesMustFall and the #RhodesMustFall generation of young black South Africans. This movement, which I term afrodigitalism, is characterised by intermedial works, with text, images, videos, and audio works often melding together in online spaces. Works are frequently dynamic and creatively ambitious. These Afrodigitalists are at once poets and photographers, playwrights and vloggers, digital practitioners, and life writers. Although such works are often published in English for a Pan-African readership, they remain distinctly African, exploring creative forms that speak to traditional literary forms like oral storytelling.

My research will inform several case studies focused on three writers. These writers include Koleka Putuma, the poet, performer, theatre practitioner, blogger, essayist, and founder of Manyano Media. Xabiso Vili, poet, new media artist, performer, and digital strategist, and Lidudumalingani, writer, photographer, filmmaker, City Editor, and recipient of the Caine Prize for African literature.

The aim of this research is to establish a more robust understanding of the diversity within contemporary South African literary production and how such literature is deeply interwoven with digital culture and technology.

Keywords
African Literature, Intermediality, Digital, Transmediality

Bio
Jasmine Mattey is currently undertaking a PhD in digital culture at the University of Bergen.