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EDITORIAL: Language, Literature and Media technologies

This first issue of volume 3 of the Multilingual African Digital Semiotics and E-Lit Journal (MADSEJ) assembles three articles that, from different perspectives, explore how language, literature, media and technology shape contemporary African life. Their subjects range from algorithmic representations of African identity to French-language health communication and the influence of cartoons on young audiences. At first glance, these topics may appear distinct. Read together, however, they raise a shared question: how do the stories, images and media that circulate around us influence what societies know, value and imagine?

Ajah's "African Identity in the Age of Algorithms: Literary Imaginations, Digital Cultures, and Africanfuturist Futures" opens this conversation by considering what it means to represent African identities in an increasingly data-driven world. The article draws attention to the possibility that algorithms, artificial intelligence and data economies may reproduce older inequalities in new technological forms. This concern resonates with Nick Couldry and Ulises A. Mejias's account of data colonialism, which examines how human life is appropriated as a source of data and value within contemporary systems of capitalism as it was in the previous centuries (Couldry and Mejias 83). The question, then, is not simply whether African societies have access to digital technologies, but also who designs these systems, whose knowledge they recognise and whose stories they make visible.

Ajah's discussion also places African literary and digital production within the imaginative possibilities of Africanfuturism. Nnedi Okorafor's distinction between Africanfuturism and Afrofuturism is useful here because it foregrounds Africa, its histories, cultures and geographical realities as starting points for imagining the future (Okorafor). Through readings of selected literary works and digital narratives, Ajah considers how African creators can use technological media to recover narrative agency and imagine futures that are not dictated by technological systems alone. The article's central insight is that technology does not determine the future by itself. The meanings and consequences of technological change also depend on the memories, values, choices and creative practices of the communities that domesticate it.

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The second article, "Français et objectifs de développement durable: une analyse linguistique systémique fonctionnelle de quelques pathographies infographiques francophones," by Harmony Ezinne Okoro and Eunice Toluwalope Akanbi, turns to the role of language and visual communication in public health. Focusing on Mohamed Aouamri's *Ulcère de Buruli* and Keline Fichter's *Juma et le Trachome*, the authors examine how French-language infographic narratives communicate information about neglected tropical diseases, treatment and prevention. Their analysis is informed by Systemic Functional Linguistics, particularly the account of language as a resource for making ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings developed by Halliday and Matthiessen (Halliday and Matthiessen 1). The article also considers how images and written language work together. This emphasis is consistent with Kress and van Leeuwen's approach to visual design, which treats images as organised systems of meaning rather than as mere illustrations (Kress and van Leeuwen 79). In health communication, such choices matter: the way information is worded, arranged and visualised can affect whether readers understand it and know how to respond. Nutbeam's work on health literacy is relevant to this point because it extends the concept beyond the simple receipt of information to include people's ability to access, understand and use health knowledge (Nutbeam). By bringing linguistic and visual analysis to francophone health materials, Okoro and Akanbi show how language studies can contribute to wider conversations about public communication, health literacy and sustainable development. Their focus also connects with the United Nations 2030 Agenda, which places health and well-being among the central priorities of sustainable development (United Nations, General Assembly).

Oyegbade's "Language, Literature and the Media: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Cartoon Media on Youth Development" addresses another influential part of everyday communication: the cartoons watched by children and young people. Through a critical discourse analysis of five selected cartoons, the article considers how animated programmes may shape curiosity, attitudes, values and behaviour. The findings reported in the abstract point to a mixed picture. Some productions encourage constructive values, while others may present or normalise behaviours that the study regards as undesirable, including aggression, truancy, laziness and gambling. The article therefore calls for greater attention to the content made available to young audiences and to the responsibilities of media producers.

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Research on media effects offers a useful context for this discussion, while also reminding us to avoid overly simple claims about causation. Anderson and his co-authors review evidence concerning the relationship between exposure to media violence and aggressive behaviour among young people (Anderson et al. 81–110.). Patti M. Valkenburg and Jochen Peter, in turn, argue that media effects differ according to individual and social characteristics, rather than affecting every audience member in the same way (Valkenburg and Peter 221–43). These perspectives help frame the questions raised by Oyegbade: what kinds of behaviour do cartoons portray, how might young viewers interpret those portrayals, and what roles do age, family, school and social environment play in the process? The article's emphasis on responsible media selection is therefore relevant to ongoing discussions about media literacy and youth development.

Although the three articles examine different materials, they meet around the question of representation and its consequences. Ajah considers whose identities and cultural knowledge are recognised in algorithmic spaces. Okoro and Akanbi examine how linguistic and visual choices make health information meaningful and accessible. Oyegbade explores the values and behavioural models communicated through children's cartoons. In each case, media are more than neutral channels through which information passes. They help organise meaning, shape attention and influence how people understand themselves and the world around them.

This shared concern gives the issue its interdisciplinary character. The contributions bring postcolonial critique and Africanfuturist thought into conversation with Systemic Functional Linguistics, multimodal analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis. They also move between English- and French-language scholarship and address questions that matter across linguistic and national boundaries. Such encounters are important to African humanities, where the study of cultural production increasingly requires attention to digital systems, public communication, visual expression and everyday media practices.

Taken together, the articles invite readers to think critically about the media and technologies through which contemporary societies tell stories, communicate knowledge and transmit values. They remind us that digital innovation must be considered alongside questions of cultural agency and representation; that public health information must be communicated in ways people can understand and use; and that media for young audiences deserve careful attention. These are not

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isolated concerns. They are part of a broader effort to build more inclusive, informed and socially responsible cultural environments.

We are grateful to the contributors for entrusting their work to MADSEJ and to the reviewers for the time and critical attention they have given to the manuscripts. We also thank our editorial colleagues and readers for sustaining the journal's commitment to rigorous, multilingual and interdisciplinary scholarship. We hope that the articles in this issue will encourage further research and conversation across African literary studies, digital humanities, language studies, media studies and related fields.

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