

Foreword

If AI were a question, then this edition carries with it nuances that attempt at coming to some sort of answers. These not-quite-answers, indeed, stubbornly refuse to settle the matter comfortably. Instead, they reignite a rush of even more questions. The papers in this edition show, tell, or even dramatize, the idea, reality, or cultures surrounding AI. Of course, the very basis of these conversations, arguments, or illustrations, is a need to disambiguate “Artificial Intelligence”. When does intelligence become artificial? And where does artificial start where “non”-artificial (or even human) has stopped? The nature of our papers refuses to be boxed within question-and-answer strictures, but open wider probing in the areas of theatre, film, architecture, education, even religion.

An unpopular complaint is floating in the corridors of justice in Kenya. Worryingly, judges are enraged that lawyers are writing their briefs using AI. In one story, from Kenya’s Daily Nation of May 26th 2026, the title reads: “Judges Warn Lawyers over AI After Bizarre LGBTQ Case Citation in Land Row”. Apparently, the lawyers in a case on land ended up citing an LGBTQ rights’ matter in pleadings before a judge who promptly told them off, for use of irrelevant authority. In yet another story, from Eastleigh Voice of April 2026, the headlines read: “Court Nullifies Judgement over AI Generated Pleadings, Sets Aside Ombudsman Case.” From these many cases, judges have made a distinction between “human-written” filings from AI drafted ones. The matter should be as clear as that, but there still lingers a whiff of the story of AI in Kenyan courts not ending soon, as policies are being set up exploring how AI can be of use within those corridors of the law. Perhaps this is the sign of our times, that given the constantly changing nature of AI tools, institutions that have exercised power over the citizenry have to wisen up fast, such as is the case with the Kenyan Judiciary system. The use of AI, or not, is being touted as sometimes giving one advantage over others, on matters before court. At other times, it is being seen as testing a judge’s patience, especially where authorities, or cases cited do not exist, or are irrelevant. Yet, even in the doubters of AI’s capacities, is a small fraction of the appeal to technology that should speed up certain processes. How will institutions that have developed age-old traditions of approaching matters manage in these fast-changing times?

Our papers are, thankfully, set around institutions that appear to abhor change, or at least to absorb it slowly. First, is the home front, where relationships between the family and their house-help is always in a quandary. How has AI stepped in to sometimes empower, sometimes enlighten, or even humanize the house help in ways that she couldn't feel before? Secondly, is the live theatre space, that often prides itself as not being "film", and often sometimes rejecting technology, capable of surviving the AI onslaught? How is AI reshaping it, or reaffirming certain aspects of its existence, in places like Eldoret? Similarly, we must think about architecture and what it means, and whether AI can actually take us there, or not! What about school, or religion, or indeed, our basic understanding, even philosophies of what it means to be human? How are these thought spaces grappling with AI? For, as we are seeing of Kenya's court system, the school system in under siege where; homework is AI-assisted, critical thinking has been sublet to the machine, and data, tons of research work, sometimes unverified, is open to use or misuse to both students and academics.

In the first instance, **Terry Kaberia** piques our interest with her observation of the changing face of the Kenyan "Shagalla", or househelp, based in the Gulf. The Shagalla, is at once a migrant worker, who has come, as observed of Kaberia's focus, from Kenya to work in households in Arabian countries. The Shagalla must feel lonely, homesick, or even simply bored, therefore gadgets like the phone, or tablet, become of use in mitigating her circumstances. The paper is interested in how short videos find audience via algorithmic happenstances that position the Shagalla as a storyteller in her own right, where previously, she is a faceless, often nameless, person. Indeed, here we find a paper that takes away from the often heard of pains of the Shagalla, to a situation where the worker has her own voice, and agency. Yet, how can these performances from the margins be enroped in other well-known sets of performances at places like The Kenya National Theatre? The paper takes us through these issues, if only to explore aspects of AI that are not at the fore.

The second paper by **Octavious Onyango** makes us see a model of working in the theatre known amongst thespians as "Peke Yangu" (I alone) model. The claim is that AI has given theatre producers of this "Peke Yangu" model an easier way out of their problems. The "Peke Yangu" model producer is involved in all aspects of production including scripting, directing, acting, marketing, stage management, and even lighting. With AI, it is possible to make marketing material to suit the product, as well as to work on a script. Unfortunately, the paper observes, this reliance on AI is a gamble that is susceptible to productions that have uncritical sameness and that carry no identity. Through a metaphor provided in a play in production under 64 Theatre Productions, titled *My Robot*

Brother, the paper attempts to show how humans who have come into contact with AI often react, with fascination, curiosity, excitement, and upon using it, become quickly aware of its excesses or limitations, accepting it in a “meta-modern” way.

Under “Building the Future”, **Barbara Adair** takes us back to an architectural masterpiece constructed in 1938 and known as Fiat Tagliero in Asmara city of Eritrea. The building is a meeting place for a complex web of meanings, ideas, histories, humanities, races, colonial practices, subjugation, hope, desires, hate, as well as admiration. 1938 was itself a precarious year, when the drums of the second world war are beginning to beat in Europe. At the same time, Italy was coming out of a war of aggression against a confident Ethiopia that inspired a continent on the question of the vulnerability of the colonizer. The Fiat Tagliero, constructed in the fashion of “Futurism”, was itself a self-esteem project for Mussolini and his fascist regime suffering from the defeat from Ethiopia in that neighborhood of Eritrea. Histories mingle here in ways that cannot be captured by AI, observes the paper. The nooks and crannies of the stories emanating from this building cannot be understood by one take of internet’s budging, or any AI tool’s intervention for it involves feelings, of interviewees, as shall be read, who observe that “Allah - praise be his name, is not here, he does not protect it!” Yet, other Eritreans feel as though they own the building at this moment in time. How could all this ambiguity ever be captured by AI?

What about being human in the face of a technology-dependent world? **Lydia Muthuma**, starts off her paper as a reading of *Antiqua et Nova*, a document that capture’s Pope Francis’ sentiments on AI. In the text, we learn, the papacy is interested in creating a clear distinction on the question of what it means to be human within the parameters of a world that is swiftly giving up aspects of its humanness to technology. There comes a feeling then that man is beginning to be lazy, thought is being given up, and faith, then, becomes a victim, shunned, for why should man believe in any supernatural power if the uber-machine is at play? These questions are dealt with in this paper with an eye to East Africa’s situations within our classrooms in the education sector. What are lecturers to do in the face of student’s overreliance on AI? Still, there is the welcoming idea of “Artificial Intimacy”, and what that can portend for current generations. What grounds the paper is an attempt at the beginning to give a semantic interplay between “Artificial Intelligence” and “Algorithmic Intelligence”.

Dr. Fredrick Mbogo
Senior Lecturer, Department of Creative Arts and Media,
Technical University of Kenya
Issue Editor



Open Access. This work is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Noncommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, duplication, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, a link is provided to the Creative Commons license and any changes made are indicated. The images or other third-party material in this article are included in the work's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in the credit line; if such material is not included in the work's Creative Commons license and the respective action is not permitted by statutory regulation, users will need to obtain permission from the license holder to duplicate, adapt or reproduce the material.