

Feminist Africa

Issue 20 | 2015



Feminism and Pan Africanism

Feminist Africa 20

Feminism and Pan-Africanism

Issue 20: July 2015

First published in 2015 by the
African Gender Institute
All Africa House
University of Cape Town
Private Bag
Rondebosch 7701



© in published edition:
African Gender Institute,
University of Cape Town,
South Africa, 2013

ISSN: 1726-4596

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Published with the support of the African Women's Development Fund.

Typesetting, printing and cover design: COMPRESS.dsl | www.compress.dsl.com

Cover photograph: Women Demanding the Release of Angela Davis from Prison in Somali capital Xamar (Mogadishu), 1972. Photographer unknown.
Source: <http://sinbarras.org/2013/03/12/88/>

Distribution: AGI staff

Feminist Africa is a scholarly journal accredited by the
South African Department of Education.

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Acknowledgements

The *Feminist Africa* team acknowledges the intellectual input of the community of African feminist scholars and the Editorial Advisory Board.

We thank the African Women's Development Fund for their financial support towards production and publication.

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Editorial: Feminism and Pan-Africanism

Amina Mama and Hakima Abbas

This 20th issue of FA sets out to continue documenting and reflecting on feminist contributions to pan-Africanism, and the implications of pan-Africanism for feminism in Africa. Issue 19 indicated the variety of discourses and contributions of feminists in pan-Africanism. In this issue, our contributors explore just some of the ways in which neoliberalism and neo-colonialism have distorted and obscured feminist articulations of the pan-Africanism dream. While the previous issue clearly underlined the role and contribution of women in the pan-African intellectual and activist project (see Rhoda Reddock, Carole Boyce-Davis features in FA19), it became clear that post-colonial engagement on the continent comes out of a very different set of conditions. Today the continental mainstream pan-African agenda is dominated by powerful men who are mostly concerned about using conservative pan-African rhetoric to the service of their often anti-democratic purposes. The varied grassroots pan-African movements of the past have been reduced into a hegemonic pan-Africanism narrative that has become an institutionalised support for patriarchal values. Though the Organisation of African Unity transformed itself into the African Union in 2001, the institution remains dominated by the old boy's club of Presidents who utilise oppressive political cultures to remain in office beyond their constitutional terms, despite the mass resistance that we have witnessed this year in Burundi. Other leaders are engaged in conflicts that make a mockery of grassroots pan-African ideals dedicated to a liberated continent. The new hegemonic meanings of 'Africa' are being articulated by presidents from Mbeki to Mugabe who at times poetically expound on the renaissance of an African dream for freedom and at other times disfigure the transnational anti-imperialist thrust of pan-Africanism in order to entrench localised authoritarian rule, buttressing this

with nationalist, patriarchal, anti-feminist rhetoric that all too many of us remain gullible to.

Addis Ababa, the headquarters of the African Union, is home to something very different from the diasporan and early nationalist visions of the confederated state (advocated by Diop and Nkrumah), or the ancestral homeland that the Garveyites had hoped to return to, and no less different from the revolutionary society pursued by more radical, anti-capitalist movements in Guinea-Bissau, Algeria, and Southern Africa. Instead, we have a modern state-styled bureaucratic political structure. The architecture accompanying the African Union is grandiose, in keeping with the presidential culture that prevails. Perhaps in keeping with the economic malaise that has dogged African development, the building itself was fully paid for and constructed by the Chinese. It rises above the dusty impoverished streets of Addis, a cenotaph to the dreams of those who died for Africa's liberation. For the local inhabitants of Addis it is a nightmare of securitisation, with regular mass removals several times a year, whenever Africa's presidents are due to meet. With its walls adorned with portraits of male leaders, one could be forgiven for seeing the present-day incarnations of pan-Africanism as an elite men-only affair. Critics observe that, despite the efforts of the first woman Chairperson to create more civil society forums, by and large the OAU/AU still operates as if working class people never lived or died for freedom, never served the revolutionary pan-African cause of the liberation of all Africa's peoples from oppression, exploitation and marginalisation, both in their own nations, and in the world.

Beyond the AU, which, like the UN is constrained by its member states, African movements across the continent have their own visions, and interests for continental unity and solidarity. Even back in the era when the national liberation movements dominated, the transnational pan-African Women's Organisation (PAWO) advocated for women's liberation through a continental lens. PAWO worked alongside male-dominated nationalist movements, which women of that generation contributed to with numerous courageous actions, and often-times with their lives. This reality is a powerful fact of African history. Without the research and documentation work done by feminist activists and researchers this knowledge might well have been lost to us. Though the coverage of feminist struggles within academic circles has expanded due to a larger feminist presence in higher education and research,

challenges still remain. Pan-African discourses without class and gender analyses have limited, if any, relevance to women. It should be our goal to pursue political possibilities that would be opened up by revolutionary feminist pan-African discourses that work in the service and interests of African people across borders and language zones.

In this issue, disparate continental relationships to pan-Africanism are explored through considerations of neoliberal economics and their negative impact on the possibilities for a feminist pan-Africanism (Lyn Ossome), examples of transnational efforts to bring about changes in political leadership and peace-building (Cheryl Hendricks), and the creative work of feminist pan-Africanist writer, Ama Ata Aidoo (Delia Kumavi). We regret that our efforts to secure contributions from French-speaking feminists were not successful.¹

Ahikire, Musiimenta and Mwiine's article 'Making a Difference' shares the findings of research commissioned by ISIS-WICCE to investigate the challenges of moving beyond mere inclusion of women in political institutions. The Ugandan case study was carried out as part of a pan-African action, research and institution-building project currently being orchestrated by ISIS-WICCE, itself a transnational organisation that has worked across the continent's war zones for decades, and which sees the need to work towards a new political culture (FA 10 carried an interview with Ruth Ochieng, Executive Director, ISIS-WICCE). Africa remains marginalised and hampered by destructive conflicts that continue to be misrepresented and poorly understood. Luam Kidane provides an acerbic review of Goran Hugo Olsson's much-acclaimed-in-the-West documentary, taking issue with the persistent distortions, of both African realities, as well as the work of revolutionaries like Frantz Fanon. Also on the cultural front, Delia Kumavie's feature discusses key aspects of Ama Ata's work as a pan-African feminist writer, while Helen Yitah reviews Yaba Badoe's latest documentary 'The Art of Ama Ata Aidoo' (2014). Three years in the making, due to the travails of procuring funding for African film-makers, the film owes its completion to the community of supporters who responded to with a crowd-sourcing initiative, raising almost 50% of the funding. This, in conjunction with the support of the African Women's Development Fund, enabled the completion of this project.²

One thing that is clear is that throughout the history of women's cultural production and organising, women's ideas and movements express principles of continental unity and solidarity across colonial borders. The challenges of

continental organising have always been significant, particularly in relation to external actors. So for example, when it comes to resources, donors still prefer to channel resources along colonial borders. It seems that for all the 'grassroots' rhetoric, such agencies remain curiously reluctant to accept that colonially inscribed borders do not define African people – least of all the vast majority of who have no passports. African civilisations were not constrained by the borders of colonial, now post-colonial, states, nor was the radical pan-Africanism evident in those liberation movements that challenged subjection to the global expansion that was required to sustain Western capitalism, as Walter Rodney and many others have demonstrated. Unfortunately, even Africa's more revolutionary movements were to lapse into patriarchal state-centred politics and economic policies that ensured that national liberation did not mean liberation for women, or victory for pan-Africanist visions of a liberated Africa. Pan-African feminist movements have emerged since flag independence, as women have risen to the challenge of engaging in a whole new struggle, not merely to secure better political representation, but further – to challenge multi-faceted cultural and material oppressions based on gender and sexuality.

The long-term commitment of feminists in Africa to transnational organising predates the recent iterations of 'transnational feminism' in Western discourses, and has been further underlined during the last decade. The African Feminist Forum has mounted a series of remarkable continent-wide convenings that invoke pan-African traditions to promote solidarities and shared agendas (see Jessica Horn's review in FA 11). AAWORD/AFARD has been revitalised with a new generation taking up the leadership. FEMNET, ISIS-WICCE, ABANTU for Development and AAWORD/AFARD are among transnational African networks that continue to actively pressurise continental governance forward on questions of gender equality, carrying out training, policy advocacy, documentation, publication and other activities.

The persistence of material and cultural gender-oppression and injustice has generated post-colonial movements of women across the political spectrum. Liberal and neoliberal women seek representation through entry into the existing structures of power and leadership. Others apply critical analysis to demystify the patriarchal structures and cultures which have often failed women. On the basis of systemic analysis, radical feminists pursue transformative gender politics, often by organising autonomously and beyond

state structures to challenge war, poverty, lack of basic rights and injustices.

In sum, feminists in Africa share a regional experience of the incompleteness of the struggle for African liberation. We see the inter-connections between multiple oppressions, and are set to continue pursuing freedom in the firm belief that a just and humane order – another world – is possible. The struggle continues.

Endnotes

1. French, as colonial a language as English is only one challenge. What of the many indigenous languages omitted by scholars and writers, which only Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o has been able to accomplish? The fact is that multilingualism requires another level of resources, and the means to address differences that are not merely linguistic, but also of philosophical and intellectual traditions. It requires the voluntary labour of our French-speaking sisters, our Arabic and our Portuguese sisters. We reiterate our open invitation, and call for the mobilisation this will take to implement.
2. Full disclosure: Amina worked with Yaba Badoe on this film, making it the second of two collaborative film projects, the first of which was 'The Witches of Gambaga', discussed and reviewed in FA 16 (www.witchesofgambaga.com)

In Search of the State? Neoliberalism and the labour question for pan-African feminism

Lyn Ossome

Introduction

Since the 1970s, informal work has expanded and appeared in new guises in the context of globalisation, neo-liberalism and migration, all of which are highly gendered processes (Chen et al. 2004; ILO 2002b, 2007a). An as yet unsettled question posed within feminist debates is whether women's increased participation in informal economic activity contributes to their empowerment or their impoverishment (Meagher 2010). While economists have tended to see the informal economy as a source of economic opportunity for women in a sphere free of the gender-biased regulations of the formal economy (USAID 2005), more critical feminist and political-economy analyses have argued that the informal economy represents a poverty trap for women, concentrating them in low-skill, low-income activities with little prospect of advancement (Chant and Pedwell 2008; Chen et al 2006; Sassen 2002). Recent ILO research on gender and informal economies, and gender studies of global value chains offer gender analyses of wider global economic change processes, paying attention to informal labour markets, global commodity chains and transnational livelihood networks (Barrientos et al. 2003; Sassen 2002). These studies show that global and national economic changes have not limited women's entry into labour markets, but rather incorporate them on unfavorable terms. Women are pushed into temporary and vulnerable employment within the informal economy, and excluded from more lucrative opportunities opened up by globalisation and liberalisation (Meagher 2010).

Prior to the economic liberalisation policies of the 1980s, the informal sector was often seen in terms of the failure of the formal sector to absorb surplus labour (Tsikata 2009). In the 1970s informal activities were regarded as disengagement from the state, a perspective that highlighted the resilience

and autonomy of traders, and their collective impact as non-state economic actors. This literature addressed the state's withdrawal from economic processes under economic liberalisation (Tsikata 2009; Lourenco-Lindell 2004). In this context growing the formal economy was viewed as a solution to exploitative labour relations observed within the informal economy, and the means through which economic growth and development could occur (Mhone 1996). For decades, many African governments deployed punitive control measures in efforts to discipline the informal sector. However, governments' compliance with neoliberal reforms kept the informal economy expanding, as more and more of the labour force was retrenched from the formal economy. Additionally, the punitive measures and abuse of human rights within the informal economy gave rise to various social movements advocating for informal workers' rights, some of which ended up institutionalising themselves as organisations advocating for informal workers. The decent work campaign popularised by the ILO and transnational organisations, and the opening up of political space in Africa also facilitated informalisation (Mitullah 2010; Olukoshi and Wohlgemuth 1995).

Since the mid 1980s, research and policy have turned towards the informalisation of employment relations. Informalisation has been discussed in the literature as: i) the growth in size of the informal economy which has accompanied the reduction in the size of the formal economy; ii) the systematic changes in labour relations from formalised to more informal arrangements (Tsikata 2009; Chen et al. 2006; Beneria 2001; Sethuraman 1998); and iii) a feature of contemporary economic growth and the global economy (Chen et al. 2006; ILO 2002). While this phenomenon has deep historical roots in many Southern settings (Lindell 2010), the era of economic liberalisation has seen informalisation take on increasingly gendered manifestations.

Drawing from this general context, this paper aims to highlight some of the challenges that labour informalisation poses for feminist politics in Africa. Drawing on feminist political economy, I argue that labour informalisation in the context of neoliberalism poses particular challenges for pan-African feminist emancipatory politics. The paper comprises three parts: the first broadly outlines a policy and discursive framework within which the informal economy in Africa may be understood; the second reviews feminist critiques of labour informalisation in Africa, outlining various feminist demands from a pan-Africanist perspective; the third focuses on the social, cultural

and political constraints which neoliberalism places upon states – critically locating the informalisation of women’s labour in Africa within pan-African feminist debates.

Policy context

Economic policy discussions on informal economy have proceeded within two broad discursive frames: a market-centered discourse, rigidly centered on the needs and interests of the market; and a market-decentred discourse interjected by strong counter-discourses that become visible in moments where the contradictions of capitalism are manifested (Macharia 2007). State functionaries in Africa will more often than not articulate neoliberal discourse that is impervious to counter-discourses, resulting in market-centered policies. When successful critical discourses draw state and public attention to concerns of informal labour and generate policies to mitigate market forces (Ibid: 205). Feminist discourses, by focusing on the rights of women workers, add an additional dimension. Drawing from Macharia (2007) and others, I will discuss these three co-existent discourses.

The globally hegemonic neoliberal discourse dominates African economic policies. Propagated by the Bretton Woods bi- and multi-lateral lending institutions, it is based on the belief that the market is neutral and fair (Macharia 2007). Harvey (2005) critically defines neoliberal ideology as a mask for practices designed to maintain, reconstitute and restore elite class power. Beneria & Roldán’s (1987) treatment of class as a ‘function of gender’ adds an important dimension. Read together, these critiques suggest an understanding of neoliberal ideology as obscuring practices that serve to entrench inequalities based on both gender and class, both oppressions being mutually constitutive (Macharia 2007: 214). The neoliberal discourse on the informal economy is centered on capital, identifying the constraints to creating capital and proposing ways in which pro profit-making conditions may be established, as evident in the World Bank’s *World Development Report* (2005). The Bank identifies the challenges facing microentrepreneurs as including insecure property rights, corruption, policy unpredictability and limited access to finance and public services (WDR, 2005). More specifically the Bank argues that red tape in business registration hampers access to financing and creates distortions (WDR, 2005). This discourse valorises entrepreneurship and micro-enterprises despite the evidence that such activities are precarious

and yield meagre incomes. Solutions offered to enhance the profitability of 'microenterprises' are therefore based on correcting purported distortions (Macharia 2007: 215-6). While in recent times the Bank has sought to demonstrate an awareness of some of the limitations of neoliberal economic policy, its ultimate interest nevertheless remains in the creation of a 'better investment climate' and in capital generation through taxation (Ibid: 217). A significant critique is put forward by heterodox development economists who underscore the fact that economic growth and poverty alleviation cannot be positively correlated. In fact, studies from across the Global South show growth in country indicators of economic performance, correlating with massive increases in self-employment, informalisation and casualisation of work, and accompanied by rising poverty and a fall in real wages, particularly for women workers.¹

Within the labour rights discourse, the International Labour Organization's (ILO) approach to informality is concerned with 'risks to labour' (Macharia 2007: 225). While the neoliberal position necessitates a laissez-faire capitalism with minimal state intervention in the market, the labour rights position calls for protection and insurance of workers. The ILO defines policy issues in terms of 'risk' (see Chen et al, 2001; see also Cohen et al. 2000), that is, general risks stemming from illness, property loss, disability, etc., and work-related risks such as little assurance or guarantee of work, low wages, few worker benefits, unsafe/unhealthy work conditions, insufficient market information, skills, access to existing/emerging market opportunities and career opportunities. The recommendation subsequently is a shift in macroeconomic policies (structures of aggregate demand, prices of inputs and outputs, incentives and subsidies) to favour 'informal' units, operations and products, 'a pragmatic approach to labour legislation balancing concerns for health, safety and security of workers and the broader community with concerns for the financial viability of 'informal' enterprises' (Chen et al, 2001, 2006).

Labour rights discourse at times broadens beyond ILO's risk categories to encompass all issues of concern to workers, highlighting particularly the right of street vendors to unionise and make demands on the state (Macharia 2007: 226). While the 'labour rights' discourse is instrumental in promoting worker interests, particularly for those workers operating within collectives, it is important to consider the relevance of the idea of unions in discussions about 'informal' workers. Labour rights discourse generally addresses unionised

formal sector workers, in employer–employee relationships, and already the subject of international advocacy (Ibid). Self-employed workers are generally not organised, or covered by conventional unions. In addition, conventional unions in Africa have declining membership due to the contraction of formal jobs and inverse expansion of the informal economy. This has implications for the political vibrancy of unions and their ability to successfully bargain on behalf of members. And despite the potential for political action, the unionisation of ‘informal’ workers is difficult, as theory and empirical evidence demonstrate (Ibid). Further, the collectives of workers in more lucrative and male-dominated informal occupations are relatively visible, and have dominated state-convened policy deliberations when compared to street vendors’ collectives. Even street vendor collectives are predominantly male-led and tend to focus on the interests of their male membership. Unionisation that fails to recognise and respond to gender power disparities serve to accentuate inequalities, further marginalising those who are already poorer and less powerful (Macharia 2007: 227).

The feminist discourse on informal work draws attention to issues of concern to women and marginalised groups that arise from inequitable gender power relations at home as well as the workplace (Macharia 2007). For instance it addresses how the lack of recognition and compensation for care work has worked to reproduce gender power hierarchies at the household level (Beneria, 1979), as well as how the replication of domestic labour relations in the workplace disempowers women. Women are concerned about how social-reproductive tasks will be fulfilled when they are absent from the home. Providing materially for children becomes a pre-occupation for women vendors given that almost 50% of them are single, divorced or widowed and have no supplementary support (Macharia 2007). At the workplace, gender-based harassment and discriminatory treatment also become concerns for women workers (Ibid). Homeless market traders and street vendors, the majority of whom are women, also face challenges of personal security and are vulnerable to physical and sexual violence and robberies in the markets and streets at night (Tsikata 2009a; Macharia 2007). Other determinants of harassment and/or discrimination include age, physical ability and citizenship (Macharia 2007), as well as caste, ethnicity, region, training and occupation. Yet feminist discourse encounters strong opposition and is often ignored in the rigidly patriarchal policy-making environment on which capitalism is

structured, and subsumed in mainstream labour rights discourse. A significant body of critical feminist theorisations on the informal economy has articulated elements of the feminist discourse on informal work, and useful positions have emerged out of these critiques which highlight women's complex structural positions that defy normative policy prescriptions towards tackling informalisation.

Feminist perspectives on African labour informalisation

Feminist analyses of the trend towards greater informalisation of women's work have shed significant light on the gendered impacts of liberalisation, while generating some specific challenges. By the mid-1980s, as a result of economic growth, the creation of new areas of work and gender-equity policies, many more women entered the labour force around the world (Sethuraman 1998, in Tsikata 2009b). While some entered professions and management jobs in the formal sector, mainly in public service, they were in the minority. The majority of women were self-employed or in waged work in the informal economy. In some African countries, export processing zones (EPZs) also utilised female labour. The increase in women's labour force participation, however, has not yielded any increases in women's earnings (Ibid). While some scholars have suggested that increases in women's labour force participation results from better education opportunities (Klasen and Woolard 2000), the fact is that there have also been significant increases among women with little or no schooling. Citing other factors in the case of South Africa, Casale (2004) suggests that the increase in female headship of households and the erosion of male income support help explain the significant rise in female labour force participation, arguing that women's labour force participation has thus responded to increases in household joblessness (Casale 2003), a likely response to long-term structural unemployment.

On-going agrarian dispossession in many African countries has placed significant strain on women's productive and reproductive labour, pushing millions of women into tenuous, informal, low-status and low-paying work. Problematising the agrarian situation, Tsikata (2009a) has argued that land tenure and labour have often been discussed separately, resulting in two insufficiently connected bodies of literature which offer useful but partial insights into the implications of gender inequalities in labour relations and resource tenures for women's livelihoods. This disarticulation between

tenure and labour might suggest a hidden gender component in land tenure reform that is characteristic of the feminisation of labour. Stated differently, de-peasantisation does not guarantee proletarianisation or meeting the costs of social reproduction via the labour market due to increasing labour flexibilisation and 'jobless growth'. Indeed, studies in many African countries suggest that women's increased labour force participation is unlikely to be associated with increased mobility in the labour market (Casale and Posel 2002) or with growth in industry – but rather are more to do with the reality of jobless growth. As Razavi (2007, citing Byres [2003]) too observes,

Industrial growth, which has historically been the *sine qua non* of massive poverty reduction by absorbing the labour force that is released from agriculture, has remained anaemic in recent decades in developing countries, with the exception of East Asia. Indeed, one of the remarkable features of structural change in contemporary developing countries has been the disproportionate shift of the labour force from agriculture to 'services' (rather than to industry), which is ominous, as much of this can be thinly disguised survival strategies indicative of a desperate effort to turn to anything that might be available (which happens to fall into the 'services' rubric) (Razavi 2007: 1484).

Further critiques, recognising women's precarity within the informal economy, also note the limitations of measures which target women for poverty reduction. From the 1990s, the World Bank placed considerable emphasis on the notion of 'poverty reduction', which in many African countries, translated into poverty reduction strategies that emphasised the importance of the informal sector for employment creation and economic recovery. Gender-awareness in WB strategies, now finally taking note of women's overwhelming representation within the informal economy, meant targeting rural women and women-headed households, as vehicles for poverty reduction. Yet, as O'Laughlin (1997) argues, the poverty focus reflects acceptance of the terms of structural adjustment programmes under which the state should programmatically seek to reduce its role in social provisioning to address only the poorest of the poor. These are defined as the structurally impoverished – those who cannot enter the market under favourable terms – women, children, the old and the invalid. The literature on women-headed households has been taken up in World Bank-sponsored studies on the social dimensions of adjustment. The institutionalisation of poverty-reduction programmes

raises the question of whether the focus on assistance to women-headed households, to reach the destitute, all the destitute, and only the destitute, locates the debate on women-headed households in Africa within a much broader ideological discussion (O’Laughlin 1997).

Furthermore, as Moore (1994: 26) has pointed out, global patterns of accumulation have meant high levels of unemployment for unskilled workers, a corresponding decline of the male breadwinner role, and discrimination against women both in the labour market and in the organisation of public transfers. Moore poignantly argues that the contemporary debate around the family is really addressing and reshaping people’s conceptions of the appropriate roles for the state, the market, public institutions and the family in social provisioning. Structural exclusion from stable, unionised, wage employment of many rural people – women and men, young and old – is not exclusion from the market *per se*. Rural livelihoods are based on patterns of consumption that imply both regular wage income and rural production. The programmatic neoliberalism of international financial institutions denies the state the right to challenge global structures of accumulation and relegates to the family responsibility for dealing with their economic and social consequences. These arguments suggest the critical importance of extricating the debate on poverty and women-headed households in Africa from neo-liberal discourse and its generic policy recommendations on targeting and market-led growth. Both rural poverty and the high incidence of women-headed households derive from exclusionary and polarising structures of accumulation (Moore 1994: 1-2). A more useful analysis would be to understand the ways in which rural communities more broadly, change under neoliberal restructuring of labour. As such, O’Laughlin (1997) argues, we need to ask not *who* to target, but rather, what should be done when capital no longer needs the labour that is pulled from rural households over so many generations (1997: 1).

Feminist critiques also highlight the complex terrain of gender exploitation, and the contradictory impacts of neoliberalism on women. On the one hand, globalisation subjects more women to increasing domination and devalorisation by capital; on the other hand, women often respond to globalisation in interesting ways. Informal jobs can be utilised to craft economic emancipation from patriarchy at home. On the other hand, it is also clear that the women’s informal labor does not dismantle androcentric, neoliberal capitalism, but rather

co-opts women (Chatterjee 2012). Still other feminist scholars argue that the equation of “globalisation” with its current neoliberal incarnation discourages attempts to envision alternatives (Jaggar 2001).

This latter question is in my view, a critical one, as it interrogates the possibility of achieving (gender) justice *within* the capitalist system. The question posed is how to challenge the super-exploitation of women’s informalised labour without destroying the informal networks of solidarity and exchange through which African women have responded to their marginalisation under capitalism.² This is much more than survivalism. African women consciously labour out of necessity, but also out of a sense of shared struggle to provide for their communities, undertaken through centuries of dispossession under slavery, colonialism, and under contemporary neoliberal capitalism. Neoliberalism redefines the ways in which we understand these forms of labour – devaluing and appropriating women’s associational life for exploitative ends. For history tells us that under colonialism in various African contexts, what might have been considered as women’s informal work in fact comprised of elaborate “life-centered social relations” that included trade and self-help networks among women’s groups and links between women’s groups and other community, church and labour organisations (Brownhill 2009: 206).

The policy challenge here relates as much to quantifying as to remunerating women’s unpaid, informalised labour.³ This point also highlights a major concern regarding the conceptualisation of informal labour: that is, the overwhelming tendency in the literature to view women’s informal sector activities as requiring formal recognition and legislation in order to provide more of the benefits of the formal economy. Since the informal sector has been growing in recent decades in Africa, this suggests that there is a potential trade-off between job creation and employment conditions. This, it is argued, is a particular challenge for policymakers who strive on the one hand to promote economic growth and job creation, and at the same time improve the situation of workers in Africa. This challenge raises a number of questions: should African governments aim to integrate the informal sector into the formal economy in order to extend benefits to this sector, even though this may hamper growth and job creation? Or should they instead focus on deregulating the formal sector to remove the barriers to workers and enterprises from participating in the formal segment of the economy? (Verick

2006: 4). The language of ‘growth’ and ‘entrepreneurship’ as a means of lifting African women out of poverty remains as unconvincing now as it was more than three decades ago when African states began to impose the will of an unjust neoliberal doctrine upon their peoples.

The political and policy implications of such thinking are stark when one considers the immense pressure placed upon African governments under structural adjustments and neoliberal governance regimes. At present, one of the foremost demands of neoliberal capitalism is its preoccupation with legal formalism, which not only undermines associations and labour practices not formally recognised by the law, but ensures that ‘legality’ determines who enters the market and what, more or less overtly, the market itself has come to signify – the very basis of citizenship claims: in Mama’s (2013) words, the privileging of “markets over governments”. This is part of the ideological assault of neoliberalism: the fact that it is through the market (commodification of labour) that individuals become legible to the state as citizens. The state – through its laws – on the one hand acts as the mediator of capital, and on the other, still stands as guarantor of the rights and liberties of its people. This is a contradiction that essentially pits the capitalist state against itself. Upon what basis therefore, do pan-African feminists set out to challenge the exploitative norms of labour informalisation given that it is through the (capitalist) state that the disenfranchising effects of neoliberalism have ‘trickled down’ to the people? What is the basis of expecting the capitalist state to formalise women’s labour rights *in the interests of women*? It is this and other questions that I briefly explore below in a discussion of the policy thrust of African states under neoliberalism.

Pan-Africanism and neoliberal constraints on state responses to informalisation

Recent years have been marked by a proliferation of studies on neoliberalism, but in spite of its diversity, most of this research discusses its import for the state. Some authors suggest that neoliberalism is characterised by the reduction of the state (Prasad 2006; Haque 2008), whereas others argue that neoliberalism is characterised by the redeployment of the state (Ong 2006; Bayart 2007; Lee and McBride 2007). Some authors present neoliberalism as the decay of an inflexible state, or as the inexorable advance of its right hand, but it is clear that the impact cannot be understood ahistorically, or

accontextually. This in itself requires thinking beyond a Western-centred global view of neoliberal expansion, to consider its variations in diverse African contexts. Two phases of implementation can be distinguished: the first, begun in the 1980s, consisted of adjustment policies that focus on the economy; the second, started in the 1990s, was marked by political adjustments in favour of democratic processes that were supposed to move beyond the failures of structural adjustment programmes of the previous decade (Hilger 2012).

According to the World Bank, neoliberalism requires a 'strong state' (World Bank, quoted in Harrison 2010: 41) because the state is an essential prerequisite to a space of pure competition. Competition requires that the state be properly positioned to correct the natural phenomena that hamper competition (e.g. the creation of monopolies, or price instability). According to the WB, the legitimacy of the state depends on economic growth; economic growth is in turn determined by the ability of the state to shape a framework within which individuals are free to pursue their individual interests, and in a world of competition this should strengthen the state. Competition and maximisation become the organising principles of the state (Hilger 2012). Following this thinking, the neoliberal restructuring undertaken in Africa by the Bretton Woods institutions from the 1980s was massive and unprecedented. Most countries became testing grounds for radical neoliberal policies, and in the 1980s alone, 38 African governments accepted 244 conditional loans from the World Bank and the IMF (Bratton and van de Walle 1997: 132-3); 10 years later, the IMF was still operating in 36 countries (van de Walle 2001: 7).

Neoliberalism's particular (and ongoing) impacts on the continent have been weighty. In many countries, the second wave of neoliberal policies (political liberalisation) imposed by international institutions reinforced the paradox of a state that is both omnipresent and completely absent (Hilger 2012). The state is both more present and visible, but at the same time, more absent and weak, capable of coercion (violence, threats, and intimidation) but incapable of fulfilling its social obligations. The state thereby shows itself to be not an apparatus but a set of processes that are not always linked to institutions, or that, in any case, cannot be reduced to these (Ibid). The changed nature of the state under neoliberalism has had varied and complex manifestations in different contexts in Africa.

Neoliberalism's impacts bear particular implications for the pan-Africanist cultural and political movement, historically concerned with reconstructing

and explaining global relationships from the perspective of Africans. At its inception, pan-Africanism was tied to strong intellectual, labour and other social movements, e.g. student movements, revolutionary movements and literary movements, all of which made pan-Africanism a central thesis in their advocacy (Maoulidi 2009). Neoliberalism's effects have been felt across these movements, and of particular concern in this paper are the alienating features. These have weakened labour movements by disarticulating economic from political questions, and concealing women's structural positions. I turn below to a discussion of specific challenges which neoliberalism poses for states with regards to the labour question, emphasising particular feminist concerns that articulate a pan-Africanist vision.

Firstly, scholarship has shed light on the ways in which neoliberalism has imposed itself as a technology of governance over and above ideology, as the most efficient and rational and pragmatic means of finding solutions to problems (Ferguson 1990). The hegemonic technocratic vocabulary of 'good governance' is articulated on the basis of axioms posed as scientific truth. 'Scientific' capitalism presents itself as the only possible path toward supposedly non-ideological, rational and depoliticised solutions to political situations. Such depoliticisation has contributed in Africa, as elsewhere, to an abandonment of the political dimensions of political and economic debates in favour of a narrow, technicist vocabulary (Ferguson 1990). Recall here, Cabral's (1973) argument that,

The value of culture as an element of resistance to foreign domination lies in the fact that culture is the vigorous manifestation on the ideological or idealist plane of the physical and historical reality of the society that is dominated or to be dominated...Like history, or because it is history, culture has as its material base the level of the productive forces and the mode of production (1973: 42).

The depoliticisation that has come about under neoliberalism, I argue, conceals the multiple dimensions of dispossession under capitalism. On one level are the various manifestations of cultural imperialism – the economic, technological and cultural hegemony that industrialised nations sustain at a global level – whose impacts negatively affect African women in particular. The ideology of technological imperialism, for instance, justifies the subjugation of nature, the unscrupulous exploitation of natural resources on the continent, and the erosion of the natural commons on which many

rural livelihoods still depend. Historical accounts of colonialism in countries such as Kenya have shown how the modes of resistance expressed by women were shaped by women's struggles to retain their productive and reproductive autonomy within the male-defined systems of kinship, production and administration (Brownhill 2009). These acts of resistance, which could be defined as *political*, were gradually eroded through colonialists' control and suppression of African communal and subsistence practices. Neoliberalism has continued this immiseration, and from a feminist perspective, its most significant impact lies in the political claims it silences. The paradoxical nature of political liberalisation under neoliberalism is that the set of rights ascribed to women are almost absolutely negated by the economic scarcity and dispossession reproduced under neoliberalism.

Secondly, political decentralisation has often been accompanied by land development and redistribution projects that have strengthened notions of private property and discourses around autochthony (Geschiere 2009). The ability to point to one's autochthonous roots is to assure oneself greater access to economic and social resources (Hilgers 2011b). Discrimination of individuals based on their 'original' belonging has occasionally been codified in the law, as in Ivory Coast and Cameroon, and found violent expression among dispossessed 'indigenous' groups, as in South Africa. Autochthony constitutes a mode of categorisation that historically enabled the identification and administration of populations. Even when it has not been officially incorporated into the law, such discrimination has had a major impact on social relations among citizens and between citizens and state in numerous countries (Hilgers 2012). These impacts extend in material yet invisibilised ways to African women's mobility across borders – mobility which is antagonised by African states bent on enforcing the stringent colonial boundaries which they inherited. The late General Secretary of the Pan-African Movement, Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem, often remarked on this point, observing that no one on the continent embodied the spirit of pan-Africanism as much as African women traders who on a daily basis can be seen crossing invisible borders between states on foot, buying goods on one side, selling them on the other and so on. The point he sought to emphasise was the organic, informal labour forms that remain invisible to policy, and are as such, antagonised by policy. The subalternity he sought to highlight defies any notion of 'migrant-as-subaltern' (Dhawan 2007) – as it rather embodies own-account workers

operating outside of organised collectives and not covered under conventional 'labour rights'. States' enforcement of territorial policies in such cases function to *demobilise* labour. As such, in reflecting on what it means for [women] to turn to the state for emancipation, Brown poses the following questions: How does the nature of the political state transform one's social identity when one turns to the state for political resolution of one's subordination, exclusion, or suffering? What kind of subject is being held out to the state for what kind of redress or redemption (1995: 101)? Even as African feminists turn to the (neoliberal) state in search of answers to these labour questions, and wage a Left-inclined struggle, are we able to account for the illegible of women – critical for mediating gender-progressive politics and sustaining a transformative engagement with the state?

Thirdly, and related to the above point is scholarship documenting the neoliberal turn with a focus on criminalisation and punishment. Comaroff and Comaroff (2006) highlight this question in reference to South Africa, noting what they view as an obsession with law and order in the country and in the postcolony more generally. These authors highlight the obsession with criminality in public discourses hostile to labouring women – prostitutes, hawkers, 'illicit' alcohol brewers – for whom legal formality is not an option in many African countries. Feminist materialist analyses contend that women's labour and sexuality are central to women's oppression within capitalist societies, and unpack patriarchal and capitalist interests in exploiting women's (affective) labour (Luxton 2001: 70). Under neoliberalism, the superficial distinction made between the sphere of cultural oppression and oppressions based on the political economy has proceeded unabated. The result is a lack of sufficient attention to the sex/gender systems which structure the organisation of labour, both in the formal and informal economy. In many societies across Africa, patriarchal norms further reinforce this distinction, mystifying the informalisation of women's labour.

The above critiques illustrate some instances where neoliberalism undermines what Campbell has referred to as the 'pan-Africanism of states' (Campbell 2005: 9). Yet the social costs of neoliberalism have fomented struggles, which highlight its class, gender and other contradictions. These struggles dramatise what might be considered as a form of 'pan-Africanism from below' or a pan-Africanism of the people. As Konings (2011) notes, beyond the multiple trajectories of societies in Africa, the diversity of

neoliberal experiments in the continent could also be explained by the variety of resistances to neoliberalism. Scholars have, for instance, demonstrated the direct correlation between the adoption of structural adjustment programmes and protest movements in Africa (Bratton and van de Walle 1997: 133). Beyond the reforms that largely benefited political elites and the austerity measures that have provoked riots in many countries since the beginning of the 1980s (with a global resurgence since 2008), these protests are also linked to the progressive erosion of governmental authority, perceived as the bearer of new constraints imposed from outside (Hilgers 2012: 90). These worldwide anti-austerity struggles confer an internationalist perspective on the ways in which neoliberalism's onslaught on the working classes ought to be understood and confronted. They furthermore, confound a pan-Africanist politics, which while emphasising Africa's general marginalisation, fails to acknowledge the complexities that implicate the continental elite in the massive dispossession of labouring classes. The extent then, to which resistances approximate and articulate feminist desires and demands on the state is a much more exigent task than the mere representation of women's demands on a continental scale.

Concluding discussion

I have sought to highlight neoliberalism's contradictory systemic tendencies and the challenges these pose for pan-African feminist organising. The homogenising impacts of these are felt in remarkably similar ways across borders, evidenced by the broad features of informal economies that lock women in low-paying, low-skilled, exploitative and temporary forms of work. The paltry incomes women earn in the informal sector cannot be separated from the gendered and sexist exploitation of wage labour in the formal economy. It is the squeeze of wages in the middle-income categories and segmentation there that determines the regimentation and valuation of labour as skilled/unskilled labour, educated/uneducated labour supply. In other words, an upward shift of wage earnings in the informal economy would likely benefit women across the labour market, both formal and informal. The factors that precipitate such a shift, and which feminist demands on African governments ought to reflect, should be structural reforms that radically shift the policies, conditions and institutions that facilitate precarity in the informal economy.

In other words, pan-African feminists are faced with the task of forging solidarity beyond a gendered identification, towards a class solidarity that engages and amplifies various mechanisms of labour organising in recognition of a shared and *systemic* oppression under global capitalism, which manifests also at the level of the household unit. It is from this perspective that it might be possible to hold African states accountable. Feminists have, in this regard, to challenge pan-Africanism's tendency towards the universalisation of oppressions among Africans, of which labouring women form a distinct and numerical majority. Feminists emphasise the links between a global political economy which functions perniciously to undermine the working classes, and implicates the ruling classes, be they of African, European or Asian origin (Naples and Desai, 2003). The greatest test is then the ability of feminists to challenge this highly dispersed global order by forging solidarity with workers' demands as a precondition for progressive pan-African politics.

My discussion has sought to shed light on the ways in which labour informalisation is gendered, with implications for a feminist emancipatory agenda. It highlighted the challenges that working within a normatively defined framework of 'labour rights' presents for pan-African feminist struggles. While feminist claims directed towards states in Africa gained particular salience within the political liberalisation that ushered in democratisation, the separation between the 'political' and the 'economic' under neoliberal orthodoxy constrains interpretations of women's structurally defined positions in the global political economy. Furthermore, the constraints which neoliberalism imposes upon African states are indicative of contradictions inherent in seeking to mediate the marginalisation of labouring women through a pan-Africanism articulated from 'above', given that African states are themselves not neutral actors in the processes that have entrenched immiseration among workers. Yet the centrality of states in pan-Africanist struggles cannot be gainsaid. For feminists, this means stepping back from the valourisation of the state, critically confronting its limitations in the face of global hegemonic powers, and working towards a re-conceptualisation of pan-Africanism which takes seriously the subjective conditions of labour produced under neoliberalism. What would it mean to place human beings before profits?

Endnotes

1. Jayati Ghosh. 2007. Remark made during a discussion session, IDEAS conference in Memory of Guy Mhone on Sustainable Employment Generation in Developing Countries: Current Constraints and Alternative Strategies, January 25-27, in Nairobi, Kenya.
2. Mama (2013) has referred to this often invisible aspect of women's labour as the "quiet power of African women, manifest in extensive subaltern farming, trading and provisioning networks through which African women sustain [...] families, communities and societies".
3. According to the UNDP's "rough estimates" at the global level, if unpaid activities were valued at prevailing wages, they would amount to \$16 trillion or about 70 percent of total world output (\$23 trillion). Of this \$16 trillion, \$11 trillion, or almost 69 percent, represent women's work (UNDP 1995).

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Making a Difference: Embracing the challenge of women's substantive engagement in political leadership in Uganda¹

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Introduction

The campaign for women's participation in public life has taken several years and efforts, and the outcomes are reflected in international human rights frameworks as well as national efforts that acknowledge women's right to participate in public space. On the African scene these efforts have delivered considerable numbers and hence considerable progress has been registered in terms of women's presence (Wang 2013). At the parliamentary level, several countries have achieved well beyond the critical mass (Rwanda 63,8%; South Africa 44,8%; Senegal 43,3%; Mozambique 39,2% and Tanzania 36%). Uganda comes on the heels of its African peers with 35% per cent of women in Parliament.² Other key numbers in Uganda include 30% minimum women representation at local government level (as provided for in the Local Governments Act 1997), 29% of the cabinet and 39% of the chairpersons and 29% of the vice-chairpersons of the standing committees of Parliament (FOWODE, 2013). In recent times, women have been appointed to head key ministries of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, Education, Health, Energy and Mineral Development, as well as Ministry of Trade and Industry.

Women's presence in political decision-making is largely premised on the fact that women in such spaces will make a difference for women's rights, development and gender equality. The question of making a difference has enjoined a robust feminist debate in the direction that, once in power, women should change the content of politics to cater for women's interests (Tamale 1999; Goetz 2003; Kwesiga et al. 2003). However, as the numbers of women in public political decision-making increase in many parts of the world, it has become more evident than ever that the strategy of getting women in formal political spaces is only part of what it takes to engender democracy. Therefore,

the question that has preoccupied the women's movement (globally) for the last decade or so is how to move beyond numbers. Put differently, the desire is to move from physical presence to strategic engagement (Ahikire, 2007).

There exists a sense of frustration amongst key actors in the women's movement, as well as gender-aware women leaders, that, despite women's increasing numbers in decision making, positive change for women is not happening as fast as we would want. The status of Ugandan women is still remarkably lower than that of men in all spheres: from that of politics and citizenship, to the economy, socio-cultural spheres, or in intimate personal relations. For example, feminised poverty, gender-based violence and the generalised lack of respect and fulfillment of women's rights seem to be the norm as opposed to the exception.

But why, in the first place, did we assume that numbers of women in decision-making spaces would automatically lead to gender-fair outcomes in actual practice? A robust feminist debate claims that women are as heterogeneous as their interests, and being female does not automatically translate into the will or the ability to pursue a feminist agenda (Tamale, 1999; Hassim, 2005). There is need for a much more sober approach that promises to take on the complexities involved in such political processes. This calls for a critical reflection, especially on the fact that women's physical presence has to be consciously translated into strategic presence (Ahikire, 2009) through a political process, which brings several players into focus. These players include, in addition to women leaders, the women's movement and the State—two different entities with very different capabilities. Outcomes of women's physical presence in the State then seem to hinge more on the articulation of the nexus between women in the State and the women's movement, and the ways in which this nexus is brought to bear on the decision-making processes in the State arena.

This article emanates from the aforementioned study conducted by ISIS-WICCE (Women International Cross Cultural Exchange), which sought to make a contribution to a holistic understanding of conditions under which women in Parliament and Local Councils (LCs) can make a difference. To achieve this, the focus quickly moved forward from the basic questions such as: "Do women represent women?" or "Do women in politics make a difference?" to questions like "What mark have women made?"; "Under what conditions has change been possible?" and more specifically "How is the nexus between

women's political leadership and the women's movement been positioned in all this?"

To pursue these questions, the ISIS-WICCE study sought to establish whether or not there existed a shared agenda between the women's movement and women politicians and how such an agenda has been pursued with what outcomes. The researchers set about carefully registering the factors facilitating and inhibiting change in the gender regimes that pervade current governance challenges such as militarism, patronage, fundamentalism, as well as the intense sexualisation of political spaces.

Registering Women's Mark in Political Leadership

For the first time women became a subject of discussion which was not the case before. Women became an issue in the public space. They started highlighting issues that affect them as women and proposing what they would want to amend for their economic empowerment. The women in Uganda became visible and audible to the extent that you could not just do without them. They were the second powerful interest group that embraced the constitution with enthusiasm, energy, and hope. They were visible at last... (Hon. Miria Matembe, July 2013).

The physical presence of women signified a critical breakthrough, an initial step of breaking into a domain that was historically not theirs. Without doubt, that presence engendered a significant shift in the public conversation. The fact that women leaders, particularly women Members of Parliament (MPs), have put what was regarded as private issues into the public space constitutes an achievement for women to celebrate. A female former MP had this to say:

I wanted to join politics and use my position to advocate for women's rights and the right to refuse to undergo female genital mutilation (FGM). I hoped to bring about a change in a culture that oppresses women...(Interview with female former MP, Kampala, July 2013).

In Northern Uganda, women councillors have specifically positioned themselves as the voice of peace, and women councillors in Pader and Agago districts have apparently influenced the public visibility of topics such as gender-based violence, defilement, and rape. Voices from Agago District indicated that:

Women leaders are making a difference in the specific area of GBV. In cases of a grave nature, the women give the victims referral letters to

health centres, LC3 and LC5. We have been able to handle cases that women leaders have referred to us. As I talk now, I have left 20 men in the cells for cases of defilement, rape and wife battering (male key informant, Agago District, July, 2013).

We had a case of medical personnel who wanted to have sex they agreed with the woman but instead of having sex he pushed in his hand and damaged the woman. After some time she started rotting and later died. When the women leaders heard about this story they demonstrated and took the man to the police. Another incident was on Women's Day when a man hacked his wife. Women mobilised, demonstrated and made sure that the man is taken to the police. Therefore women are making a difference in the area of human rights. (ISIS-WICCE Dialogue with women Councillors and V/ Chairperson, Agago District, July, 2013)

Women MPs have raised a red flag on many cases of sexual abuse, especially those that involve young girls in schools, as an urgent issue of national concern. Consider the case below:

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise on an urgent matter of national importance. Last weekend I attended Women's Day celebrations in Paya sub-county and among the reports that I received from the LC III chairman was that from January to 28 March, 124 girls had been defiled. ... When a child leaves home, the other parent to that child is the teacher, but now the teacher is the one defiling this girl. What is this teacher instilling in this girl as a person of moral authority? I am requesting that when these cases get reported, they are dealt with without fear or favour. I am requesting government to actually ensure that those who defile children are punished accordingly... (Woman MP, Tororo: Parliament of Uganda – Hansard; Wednesday, 1 April 2009).

Women's movements across the African region have mounted sustained resistance to entrenched sexual and gender-based violence, including cultural practices that are harmful to women. These struggles are a significant site for challenging oppressive gender relations more broadly and demystifying the invocations of tradition and religion to justify damaging practices. The African women's movement has also engaged the political sphere on the premise that women's interests would be advanced by women's entry into decision-making spaces such as the Parliament.

The increased presence of women in Ugandan political institutions has without doubt led to significantly more debate on women's condition, especially that to do with maternal health. In 2013, the *Red Pepper Newspaper* ran an article entitled: "Women MPs Demand Action from Government over Maternal Deaths". The Women MPs resolved to block the passing of the 2013-2014 National Budget and any supplementary budget that Government might present, unless it included a health sector supplement, or saw the Government's fulfilling the 15% funding of the health sector to maternal health that was agreed in the Abuja Declaration (2001)³, to which Uganda's government was party (15 July 2013). Furthermore, ISIS-WICCE learned that women MPs were instrumental in ensuring the provision of the basic birthing equipment provided in packages known as "maama kits"⁴ in local constituency health centres. Implementation remains a challenge in the context of run-down social services, where even rudimentary resources are shamelessly lacking, thus stalling the impact of women's legislative efforts on ordinary women's lives.

Women's organising within the political institutions of the State has also had some impact. The Uganda Women Parliamentary Association (UWOPA) is a parliamentary caucus that has been an important space for policy interventions, working to support women parliamentarians to utilise their position more effectively. UWOPA provides a forum to discuss, share experiences and support activities that facilitate women's participation and leadership with the ultimate aim of ensuring a gender-responsive legislative process. Because it is an institutionalised space, UWOPA facilitates women's influence in parliamentary processes. It has successfully pushed a number of gender-sensitive pieces of legislation through parliament, notably the Domestic Violence Act (2010) and the Law against Female Genital Mutilation. The Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (2010) was passed as a private members bill by the chairperson of UWOPA, and the revision of the Penal and Sexual Offences Bill is directly attributed to the effort of UWOPA. There are also provisions in various pieces of legislation that can be traced to the fact of women's presence. These include provisions around maternity leave in the Employment Act 2006, the clause around family land in the Land Act 1998 (amendment of 2004), and the girl-child focus in education policies, to mention but a few.

Women MPs have also used UWOPA as a key lobby site. The specific case of the African Union (AU) Protocol to the African Charter on Human and

People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa⁵ is instructive. States have been known to sign such instruments and not ratify them, meaning that there is limited possibility to infuse such norms into national laws and policies. In the Ugandan case, the Protocol was ratified in 2010, seven years after being signed. Yet it is important to register the fact that that ratification was specifically lobbied for by women leaders in parliament and in civil society. With the back-up of the women's organisations, the then-chair of UWOPA ensured that the President ratified the Protocol when Uganda was due to host the 15th African Union Summit, in 2010.⁶ In actual fact, UWOPA argued that it would be a shame for Uganda as a country to host the AU summit when it had not ratified the Protocol. Overall, limitations notwithstanding, UWOPA provides an opportunity for the women's movement to influence public policy.

Women's presence demonstrates their ability to govern in various other ways. For example, the ascendance of a woman, the Rt. Hon. Rebecca Alitwala Kadaga, to the position of Speaker of Parliament, to occupying the third position in the hierarchy of leadership in the country (after the President and Vice-President), is no mean achievement. It is an achievement that should be documented to draw lessons for the present and future. Kadaga entered parliament as a district woman MP (the affirmative action seat for women). In the 7th and 8th Parliaments, she became Deputy Speaker. When she became Deputy, her designation as 'Madam Speaker' and her visibility in the 7th and 8th Parliaments challenged the male norm. So much so, that when the Deputy (a male) presides over the parliamentary sessions, many members apparently stumble between 'Madam' and 'Mr. Speaker, Sir'. The Speaker of the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) is a Ugandan woman, Rt. Hon. Margaret Nantongo Zziwa, the first woman elected to the position.⁷ As Speakers of legislatures at the national and regional levels, the duo have demonstrated women's ability to govern.

Yet, despite all these efforts there seems to be a critical glass ceiling when it comes to effecting transformation. Women's influence seems to be limited, with women still regarded as clients in the current system. What is it that blocks a substantive articulation of a feminist agenda? In the section that follows, we seek to interrogate this question but with full appreciation, not only of the fact that female does not necessarily mean feminist, but also that substantive engagement is largely constrained by the structural context.

Understanding the obstacles

When we see an increase of women in many leadership positions, it is exciting... but leadership with a difference is clearly still a challenge. Now we are enjoying the positions, but what difference are we making? (Woman MP, Zombo District ISIS-WICCE Dialogue for Women MPs, July 12, 2013).

Ann-Marie Goetz summarises the situation in this way:

Once in office, many women have faced profound obstacles to advancing a gender-equality agenda. In effect, they have discovered deeply embedded gender-biased patterns in public decision-making and policy implementation that stop progressive public policy in its tracks. While some of the obstacles women face stem from divisions between women...most stem from challenges...where profound gender biases are embedded in the justice and public administration systems (Goetz, 2009:5).

Women's political leadership faces several hurdles at local and national levels. Patriarchy manifests in the nature of the State, and its political processes provide a conducive environment to men as political actors. It is argued, for example, that the institution of Parliament is patriarchal because women still have to constantly justify their presence and their issues. At the local level, patriarchy also plays out in the existing cultural institutions that nurture women and men differently, conferring gender-differentiated social capital that limits women's effectiveness.

The example of Uganda illustrates many key blockages to women's effective decision-making, blockages that make it difficult for feminist legislators to make a difference. In this analysis we go beyond the conventional liberal approaches of relying on gender training and capacity building. These are premised on the notion that it is women who are lacking. Rather we seek to highlight obstacles that are structural in nature: the prevailing culture of militarism, the normalised sexualisation of women, and the patronage politics characterising the multiparty dispensation.

Militarised Politics

Militarism is not just about war and armed forces. It is an ideology. Ursula Franklin (1988) defines militarism as a threat system, which when stripped of all its extraneous verbiage simply says "Do what I tell you – or else".

Accordingly, the basic value of militarism is power over others, where the population begins to accept the use of violence as a method for resolving conflict. Military ideology creates an enemy out of difference and then uses the existence of the enemy to justify continued militarism (Burke 1998). The ideology is normalised through language, which distorts and sanitises its impact (Burke 1998). Key African feminist scholars such as Amina Mama have for long advanced the analysis that feminists must as of necessity take on the permeation of militarism in African politics if we are to create substantive transformation. Mama and Okazawa-Rey (2008) argue that anti-militarism activism must be a key area of feminist strategy in the contemporary period.

The situation in Uganda reflects militarised politics more than ever before. Many women MPs expressed their sense of threat. While this militarism undermines the exercise of democracy more generally, women are more vulnerable to the threat of force. The period from 2001 to date, with a transition from mobilisation politics to a politics of regime survival, has seen constitutionalism undermined. In this context, the space for pushing a substantive gender-equality agenda in the political dispensation has narrowed dramatically.

Multiparty Politics and Patronage

The research interviews suggest that the nature of Uganda's multiparty politics has greatly inhibited the emergence of a unified women's voice at national and local levels. The creation of enemies based on political differences and the overly personalised party agendas make it extremely difficult for women to generate a strong lobby to advance women's interests.

When a political party takes precedence over other social parameters of mobilisation, women's interests can only be taken up when the party position reflects these. Women MPs emphasise that women's issues cannot be effectively addressed because women cannot form a coherent political constituency. As one MP noted: "Because the party brought you to Parliament, it can discipline you if you go against its position" (ISIS-WICCE Dialogue, 13 July 2013).

However, this is not just an individual matter. Women MPs from the ruling and opposition parties alike all note the constraining impact of the multiparty dispensation. The imposition of party gagging that is not guided by clear principles and party rules illustrates the patriarchal and militaristic domineering practices within the parties. In the case of the NRM, it was noted

that the party caucus seems to operate as a “cult”, while those in opposition parties talked of undue witch-hunting often directed at women considered undesirably strong or independent-minded.

In this context the majority of women are seen to have been captive to patronage politics. Patronage was perceived as a powerful tide moving against the achievements of women in politics:

Women are swimming upstream and there is a powerful tide moving against them downstream. It is a tide of patronage. It's the kind of patronage where people think they put you there and expect you to perform to their tune. The tide of patronage is still strong and needs to be confronted head-on (male former legislator, ISIS-WICCE Dialogue, July 2013).

Such a relationship between the government and women political leaders undermines their capacity to demand accountability and pursue social justice agendas.

The Crippling Effect of Sexual Pacification⁸

Pacification is a term derived from the process of colonisation as a tool for conquest, extended here to conceptualise the particular exercise of power to disempower women through sexual practices. The sexualisation of political space persistently emerges as a major obstacle to women's political effectiveness. This was seen to manifest itself in the lived experience of women political leaders, reflecting the dominant discourses that frame women as sexual objects rather than political actors.

At the district level women political leaders decried the sexualised language used to describe them. They indicated that, quite often, women who choose to participate in politics are commonly stigmatised as “prostitutes”, portrayed as lacking either the courage or the self-control to participate alongside men. Women councillors revealed that men often refer to women's bodies, dress style, and social interactions to intimidate, confuse or divert the attention of women councilors during local council debates. Even the most resilient women are undermined by this kind of intimidation:

I stood up in council to contribute. I had not known that as I was standing up, the button of my blouse opened. Then a male council/or stood up on a point of order... “Is it in order for the honorable member to dress indecently in the house?” It was so embarrassing, I could not

proceed. He had focused on my abdomen not even my mouth and what I was going to say (Woman Councillor, Pader Town Council, July, 2013).

Sexualised politics manifests in patronising behaviours, sexist jokes, and derogatory media representations⁹ describing women political leaders in terms of ‘best legs’, ‘big bums’ and the like. Cultural stereotyping and name-calling undermine female political leadership (IPU, 2009).

Perhaps the most daunting challenge is the predatory nature of men in political institutions:

... Men are like hyenas; very greedy...they look at female policy makers as sexual objects. If some could dare at me, what happens to the young women? It is very dangerous for young women from up-country... who find themselves rubbing shoulders with these so-called big men they used to hear and see on the TV. (Interview with female former legislator, Kampala, July 2013).

In 1999, Tamale stirred up controversy by documenting sexualisation as part of the gendered nature of parliamentary politics. At this time her revelations were received as exceptional rather than the norm. However, the sexualisation of women is now so pervasive that even the president of the country was quoted in a daily newspaper stating that the male MPs were consistently broke and indebted because they spent most of their money on “MP concubines”. The newspaper article read, in part:

The report penned recently lists sex as number one among terrible secrets that have dipped them into an awful financial quagmire. It says some male MPs spend their money financing sexual networks with fellow female legislators. Horny male MPs have had a huge drain on their incomes orchestrated by their MP concubines (*Red Pepper Newspaper*, 27 July 2013).

To make matters more complicated, key informants in the study raised the issue of sexual transactions in political recruitment. Political favours often depend on women’s willingness to yield to sexual advances. Appointment to ministerial positions stood out as one big sexual battle. For example, top men in the system are alleged to use overt threats such as: “I have seen the tentative list and your name is there, but you need to do something if you want to make it to the final list of ministers” (ISIS-WICCE, July 2013, anonymous source).

From a systemic perspective, whether or not women give in to these sexual advances is immaterial: women in general get to be labeled in sexualised terms while predatory men maintain their legitimacy as political actors.

In sum, the sexualisation of political spaces has profound effects on how women can deliver on their leadership roles. At a practical level it disorients and diverts women and negatively affects women's self-expression and esteem. At the same time, sexuality is deployed as an instrument of blackmail, creating a "damned if you do...damned if you do not" scenario. In such a situation, the push for a gender-equality agenda is undermined. A feminist response to this problem of sexual pacification will have to embrace a political process that challenges the sexual pacification of women by men in the strongest terms possible.

The Political Costs of Dismantling Patriarchy

The political culture in Uganda today tends to reject strong and effective women leaders. Women's efforts to confront male domination often position women political leaders between a rock and a hard place. Challenging the system they work in was widely described as an attempt to "rock their own boat". Effective women politicians often end up sacrificing their political careers:

A senior woman MP was considered too strong for her party because she would take on the male leaders where they went wrong, contrary to the party culture where the leaders are only supposed to be worshipped. In the wake of the general elections in 2011, party functionaries were heavily deployed to fight her. Another woman was secretly identified and provided with money and other logistical support to contest against her. During the campaigns, the Secretary General of the party camped in her constituency for over 5 days to campaign for her opponent. The senior woman MP lost the election. The big lesson, according to this former MP, was that the current party practice only supports women who tend to sing praises for the leaders. The moment one thinks independently and pursues what is right, that person is looking for a humiliating defeat (ISIS-WICCE July 2013).

Although men can also pay political costs for thinking or acting independently, women are particularly penalised in a political space where the prevailing norms and practices undermine any leverage they might have to effectively engage.

The Nexus between Women Political Leaders and the Women's Movement

Feminist scholars argue that women's interests are best defined through collective processes of interest articulation (Celis et al., 2007). In Uganda there have been many efforts to bring women political leaders and the women's movement together. According to the findings of the ISIS-WICCE study, women's organisations work to identify and support women to aspire for elective political positions, run programmes on gender and civic education and democracy, design mechanisms of accountability, and offer gender capacity-building workshops to which women MPs and councillors are invited. Despite these laudable activities, a sense of frustration persists. The frustration stems from a realisation that structural gender inequalities have persisted and major obstacles to the advancement of women still remain. The relationships between women political leaders and the women's movement that will consistently bring these actors together remain weak. Yet without a stronger nexus, Uganda's women's movement will be unable to nurture a robust feminist political agenda.

In Uganda, this nexus comprises women NGOs and women political leaders. One of the ways of strengthening the relationship between the two has been through the NGOs' provision of training. NGOs train women candidates for electoral office and offer induction programmes for newly elected women MPs and local councillors. NGOs also run different programmes in the pre- and post-election periods, offering leadership skills training for women in public office. It is in this context that ISIS-WICCE offers training around the specific challenges posed by post-conflict situations.

There have also been attempts at creating a shared agenda. FOWODE (2010) sees this as a means of bringing to the forefront gender dimensions that ought to be addressed, so that real and meaningful development for the total empowerment of women and girls can be achieved. The production of the Uganda Women's Agenda is part of a journey that the women of Uganda and the Women's Movement began in 1996. At that time Ugandan women made history as pioneers of the highly successful People's Manifesto (1996), an action that was followed by The Women's Manifesto (2001). On Uganda's return to pluralism in 2005, women consulted nationally and developed a position paper on Government's white paper on multipartyism. The women's demands came to be known as "Women's Minimum Demands to Political

Parties and Organizations”. This was subsequently followed by an updated Women’s Manifesto (2006). In preparation for the 2011 general elections, FOWODE facilitated a process of putting together a women’s agenda entitled “Equal by Right”, which was designed to guide the women’s movement.

Despite these commendable efforts, the reality is that they have not been able to do more than sustain loose, largely informal, connections between the women’s movement and women political leaders. In the meantime women MPs are still chastised for forgetting their roots in the women’s movement, while women MPs accuse the women’s movement of having unrealistic demands.

NGO approaches to women political leaders have not been sufficiently systematic, in the face of persisting systemic inequalities. Part of the problem lies in the nature of NGOs under pressure to validate themselves by claiming credit as individual organisations rather than as a women’s movement (Dialogue for Women’s NGOs Organised by ISIS-WICCE, August 2013). NGO programming tends to work from an individualistic capacity-building approach that does not do justice to the task of building a collective force of women that will unite around the pursuit of women’s gender interests.

Conversations with women MPs show a critical perspective on NGO approaches for mounting numerous ad hoc programmes. The workshop culture is criticised for dealing with women MPs in generalised terms while offering very little that might concretely enhance their ability to pursue the gender equality agenda in their legislative, oversight and representational roles.

At another level, there does not appear to be a shared sense of direction, or a systemic analysis of gender oppression. This is reflective of the fact that the women’s movement, being largely located within NGOs, has become issue-based, more reactive than proactive. As Tamale puts it:

“We only come up in response to specific issues and we do not sustain the pressure even on those specific ones...We are dealing with a long-term issue yet employing short-term strategies. It cannot work...It is a silver bullet, crisis approach rather than a sustained continuous social movement” (Tamale, 2003).

The second and perhaps more serious challenge arises from the first: Because there is no direction, it has not been possible to consolidate the modest advances that have been made into more formidable political leverage.

Without a more systematic approach it may be unrealistic to expect women leaders to make more of a difference.

Conclusion: Towards Feminist Transformation

This report was commissioned to support the planning of strategies to advance more effective pursuit of feminist agendas. In the first instance this requires overcoming the evident gap between the interests articulated by women's movements and the interests of women who have entered in the political sphere (ISIS-WICCE 2014b) While there are powerful forces that block women's sustained efforts to make a difference in the political leadership of Uganda today, there are a range of possible actions for the women's movement to turn this around. There is need for a clear political agenda that takes on the broad issues of governance and their gendered aspects in a more consistent manner and that is better informed by the systemic nature of the problem. Effecting change will require a long-term vision and strategy, as well as a concerted effort to build the women's movement into a force powerful enough to bring about deep changes in Ugandan politics and society. Ultimately such a movement must reverse the status quo by ensuring that neglecting women's interests will become politically costly for political actors.

A vibrant well-coordinated women's movement will need to create alternative channels to nurture women's political power on a much larger scale. This can be supported by a careful non-judgmental validation of women's experiences, taking stock of women political leaders' careers, and using such testimonies to critically inform and inspire other women to pursue political leadership. Ugandan politics remains volatile, highly informed by historical and social-cultural processes, whose implicit and explicit impact on political relations between women and men as political actors cannot be underestimated. The ISIS-WICCE study finds that, while most women politicians may wish to make a difference for women, the challenges they face are largely systemic and thus cannot be effectively addressed by individualised approaches or generic skills training packages.

The nexus between the women's movement and women political leaders is a key aspect of movement-building. It cannot be treated as a discrete project or as a momentary event, but rather as a long-term process, purposively powered with strategic alliances and mobilisation across social differences and partisan allegiances. With the feminist nexus that is advocated here

strengthened in this manner, women political leaders and activists will become part of a shared constituency, driving a more unified and robust movement that is a real force in Ugandan politics.

Endnotes

- 1 This article is based on Making a Difference Beyond numbers: Towards Women's Substantive Engagement in Political Leadership in Uganda – a study conducted by ISIS-WICCE (Women International Cross Cultural Exchange). The study covered the case of Parliament and two districts in Northern Uganda (Pader and Agago). The research team consisted of: Josephine Ahikire (lead researcher), Peace Musiimenta, Amon Ashaba Mwiine, Ruth Ojiambo Ochieng, Juliet Were Oguttu, Helen Kezie-Nwoha, Suzan Nkizi, Bedha Balikudembe Kirevu, Achie Luyimbazi, Harriet Nabukeera Musoke, Prosy Nakaye and Gloria Oguttu Adeti.
- 2 Interparliamentary Union (IPU), [http:// www.ipu.org/wmn](http://www.ipu.org/wmn).
- 3 Abuja Declaration on HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and other related infectious diseases was reached during an African Union Summit in Abuja, Nigeria, April 2001.
- 4 Noted in one of the dialogues with Parliamentarians organised by ISIS-WICCE. Maama kits refer to a simple and basic package necessary to facilitate child delivery. These include gloves, polythene paper, razor and cotton wool.
- 5 The (AU) Protocol covers a wide range of women's rights ranging from the elimination of discrimination against women, women's right to dignity and security of the person, livelihood, including health and reproductive rights, social security and protection by the state.
- 6 The 15th African Union Summit was held in Kampala-Uganda from 19th – 27th July 2010 under the theme "Maternal, Infant and Child Health and Development in Africa" see more; <http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/conferences/2010/july/summit/15thsummit.html>
- 7 The *New Vision* Newspaper, "How Margaret Zziwa Won EALA Speaker Post," 6 June 2012.
- 8 Concept generated during facilitated discussion at ISIS-WICCE's 2014 Kampala think-tank to 'highlight the historical continuities regarding the use of violence against African women systematised during the colonial era' (Editor's note).
- 9 See *New Vision* article 11 May 2011, "Beauty Survey of Female MPs Proves a Point."

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Creating Women's Leadership for Peace and Security in the Greater Horn of Africa: the limitations of capacity-building as remedy for gender inequality

Cheryl Hendricks

Introduction: Contextualising Gender, Peace and Security

Post-Cold war global security shifts in the early 1990s created the space for a rethink of the dominant conceptualisations of security. Key questions could be raised in the search for a new security paradigm, namely, what is security, security for whom, who are the security actors, and how should security be provided? A growing consensus emerged on the skewed and limited focus of traditional security and the need for thinking beyond the state to address the security of peoples. Both Critical Security Studies and Feminist Security Studies, critiqued the state-centred and gender-blind approaches to security, critiques which found fertile ground in an international policy environment under intense pressure to address violent intra-state conflicts that had shattered any hope of a post-cold war peace dividend. The 1994 UNDP Report therefore took up the critical analyses emanating from feminist and critical security perspectives and introduced a perspective it named 'Human Security' (UNDP, 1994).

The Human Security approach defined security as 'freedom from want,' 'freedom from fear' and 'freedom to live in dignity', thereby reorienting security discourse to address the security of civilians in our societies. This new conceptualisation of security, while it was far from 'feminist', created an opening for those already challenging the invisibility of women, and demanding gender analysis and documentation of conflict and the various measures being taken to end conflict, restore peace, and rebuild conflict-affected communities. Feminist scholars and gender activists were vociferous in exposing the gendered nature of war and the exclusion of women from peace and security structures and processes (Enloe, 1998; Tickner, 1995; Hudson, 1998; Moser and Clark, 2001; Meintjies et al, 2002). They also

pointed to the unequal gender relations that precede conflict, intensify during outbreaks of violence, and persist long after ‘peace’ has been declared. In one of those rare historical moments, feminists scholars, gender activists and policy makers all came together to jointly advocate for action to address the abject situation of women in conflict situations. All this activism bore fruit as it led to the adoption of the landmark United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (adopted in 2000).¹ This resolution calls for the increased participation of women in peace and security decision-making, the prevention of violence against women and the protection of women and girls against sexual and gender-based violence.

Across the African continent, the same period saw a renewed interest in setting out a pan-African agenda that would assist in resolving conflicts and advancing development goals, in accordance with a new mantra: ‘African solutions to African problems’ and President Thabo Mbeki’s declaration of an African Renaissance. This revival in regionalism was pursued by African leaders who proceeded to reconfigure the moribund Organisation of African Unity (OAU) into the African Union (AU) in 2001. The AU’s Constitutive Act committed the organisation to the promotion of gender equality and to women’s empowerment. Gender mainstreaming was taken up by the AU as a key tool for, among other things, the pursuit of regional commitments to peace and security. UNSCR 1325 was therefore integrated into other gender related frameworks, namely, the AU Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women (2003), the AU Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2004) and the African Women’s Decade (2010–2020). UNSCR 1325 is also a key component of the AU Policy Framework on Security Sector Reform (2012) and was incorporated into the 2014 strategic vision for the continent, Agenda 2063. This ‘roadmap’ includes calls for an Africa free from “gender-based violence as a major threat to human security, peace and development” (AU, 2013). The majority of post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding programs are currently failing women on the continent as women continue to be subjected to the extremes of violence and abuse. Gender mainstreaming in peace and security is being promoted in an effort to address sexual and gender-based violence.

Despite enormous human and financial resources expended on gender activism (advocacy and protests), capacity building (workshops and training), the adoption of more gender related UNSC resolutions (such as 1820, 1888,

1889, 1960, 2106, 2122) and UNSCR National Action Plans (46 NAPS, 12 of which are located in African countries), women's representation in peace and security institutions and processes remain minimal and their vulnerability in conflict and post conflict situations persists. Sexual and gender-based violence, or threats of violence and other manifestations of inequality, still characterise relations between men and women, boys and girls.

The reported decline in conflicts that has been achieved on the African continent since 2000 has brought little peace and prosperity for women. Currently, new forms of conflict are breaking out, some specifically targeting women (as in the case of Boko Haram in Nigeria). However, because women are predominantly framed as victims of sexual and gender-based violence, it is assumed that they only need to be included into peace processes primarily to address this particular issue, rather than allowing women to contribute more broadly to the pursuit of the long-term transformations that are sorely needed to bring about peace in war-torn countries.² Conflict management strategies to date have relied on bringing warring factions (whoever they are) to the table to discuss how they will apportion the spoils of the state. Within this political arena, all stakeholders are reluctant to include women. Analyses and activism on gender, peace and security should therefore not be limited to merely seeking to include women into inadequate existing peace and security processes. Our analyses must take a broader view of the ways in which our societies, politics and economies are being constituted and [re]configured by violent conflict. These militarising processes appear to contradict the AU's declared pan-Africanist and gender equity agendas, both of which emphasise unity, common destiny, non-discrimination and positive transformation.

Disconnects between the frameworks and initiatives being produced and the lived realities of men and women are increasingly being recognised.³ This paper, contributes to an understanding of this disconnect by presenting a retrospective analysis of a particular intervention that sought to increase women's participation in peace and security decision making on the continent. Since this was an intervention I was engaged in, it is a personal account of the assumptions and impact of our activism in the pursuit of enabling women to participate in peace and security decision making.⁴ I revisit the successes, challenges and unexpected consequences of the intervention to draw attention to the misconceived assumptions about how change occurs, the deeply entrenched nature of patriarchy, the power relations that inform and

shape interventions of this nature, and the inherent limitations of relying on training and advocacy to deliver the much-needed structural transformations.

The Women’s Leadership for Peace and Security Project

The ‘Women’s Leadership for Peace and Security in the Greater Horn of Africa’ was a three year project that began in mid-2009 and ended in mid-2012. It sought to “maximise the participation and contribution of women in national and regional peace and security decision-making and political dialogue in the greater Horn of Africa”.⁵ More specifically, the project wanted to create “security fluency” amongst women leaders, by increasing women’s knowledge and ability to converse on peace and security related issues. Secondly, it set out to “secure a seat at the decision-making table” by advocating for inclusion of women in peace negotiations and influencing peace and security policies and practices. The project identified six impact areas:

- strengthened relationships between women leaders in the greater Horn of Africa and national government/IGAD/AU/EU and other diplomatic strategic partners;
- creating an enabling environment through the institutionalisation of policy changes;
- increased knowledge and political skill to effect change;
- new faces and able voices for peace;
- enhanced mediation support functions played by women;
- strengthened women’s networking/organisational capacity for impact on peace and security policy and practice.⁶

The greater Horn of Africa – which for the purposes of this project consisted of Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somaliland, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda – was selected for intervention because many of the countries in that region were embroiled in violent conflicts at community, state and interstate levels. Women were victims (being killed, maimed, abducted, raped, displaced), supporters (wives and/or mothers of combatants giving tacit support to the conflict), actors (soldiers, rebels, cooks, intelligence gatherers) and detractors (those who spoke out against the violence and actively campaigned for peace) within all these conflicts. Yet, they were typically excluded from the peace processes that were unfolding in the region. Consequently, their needs and interests were not being tabled in the peace agreements, or in the post conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding programs that emanated from the

negotiations. They remained marginalised from the deliberations that would constitute the foundation of the [re]constructed states. The adoption of UNSCR 1325 had already highlighted that this was a global phenomenon, not restricted to African contexts. The Women's Leadership project sought to respond to the evident need to give practical expression to the resolution's aims, which are integrated into the gender equity frameworks of the African Union.

Four organisations pooled their expertise as 'partners' on the project, namely, the Club de Madrid, ISIS-WICCE, Strategic Initiative for the Horn of Africa (SIHA) and the Institute for Security Studies (ISS). The Club de Madrid, the lead partner, is a club of former Heads of State. They had the convening power to facilitate women leaders to meet with representatives of national governments and regional organisations. Isis the Women's Cross-Cultural Exchange⁷ is an international feminist organisation headquartered in Kampala. ISIS-WICCE provided support services and brought their over 20 years of experience and expertise on the issues confronting women in the region to the project. The Strategic Initiative for the Horn of Africa⁸, a network of women's civil society organisations, identified the participants and they were initially envisaged as the organisation that would co-ordinate the project given their work with and access to the women in the region. The Institute for Security Studies (ISS), based in Pretoria, is an applied policy research institution working on peace and security issues on the African continent. My role, as the representative of the ISS, was to assist in the conceptualisation of the workshops, to provide input on the conflicts and to bring our organisational experience with policy analysis and regional security mechanisms to the project. Those of us conceptualising and implementing the project, believed that by pooling our experiences and shared knowledge we could make a more substantive impact to increase women's participation than had hitherto been the case.⁹ Our major objective was to build a knowledgeable (security fluent) group of women leaders who could participate more meaningfully in peace and security decision making in the greater Horn of Africa. Failing this, we expected we would at least develop a cohort of women who could be drawn upon for advice on peace processes and gender-sensitive security policy formulation in the region.

The project targeted forty women who were identified as leaders from civil society organisations in the seven countries. Drawn from the SIHA and

ISIS-WICCE networks, the women were diverse in terms of age, language, types of organisations they worked for (human rights, development, media, lawyers, education, and peace organisations located in both rural and urban settings) as well as in their experiences of conflict and conflict management. There were also tensions between the women themselves (e.g., from Somalia, Somaliland and Puntland; Sudan and South Sudan were still at war at the time). Although the focus was on 40 women over a period of three years, it was envisaged that women leaders from larger organisations and networks, would somehow pass on their acquired skills in accordance with the assumed ‘trickle down’ effect.

The methodology for creating security fluency and getting a seat at the decision-making tables was predominantly through workshops which sought to share information and build capacity and through ‘high level’ dialogues in which stakeholders were engaged to both advocate for women’s inclusion and to create exposure for the women leaders, i.e. training and lobbying. During the period of the project we held ten workshops and high level dialogues (cumulatively billed as ‘high level missions’) in Addis Abba (3), Djibouti (1), Kampala (2), Nairobi (2), Somaliland (1) and Juba (1) (Club de Madrid, op cit). Each mission targeted a specific country, although because Somalia and Eritrea were deemed high risk, their project missions were held in Nairobi and Addis Ababa respectively. Each mission consisted of a three-day workshop in which the peace and security challenges were discussed, the gender relations highlighted and the conflict management policies and programs analysed. Each mission also included reporting (women recounted what transpired in their country between missions) and a skills training component (on advocacy, messaging, policy analysis, conflict resolution and early warning). The 3-day missions also drew on a number of consultants, both international and local, for both content and skills input.

At the end of the workshop the women leaders, who soon began to refer to themselves as the G40, would develop resolutions and/or statements which they would deliver to stakeholders (government, INGO’s and donor representatives) at a high level dialogue the following day. These dialogues were chaired by former Heads of State, such as Mary Robinson (Ireland), Valdis Birkavs (Latvia), Kim Campbell (Canada), Kjell Bondevik (Norway) and Benjamin Mkapa (Tanzania). The role of the former Heads of State was threefold, they drew participants, they were assumed to have leverage on the stakeholders (for advocacy purposes) and

they could share their experiences with the G40.

The first high level dialogue in Addis Ababa, was chaired by Mary Robinson and Kim Campbell (as members of the Club de Madrid), and jointly hosted with UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). At this gathering the G40 were able to engage with representatives of the AU Peace and Security Directorate, Gender Directorate, UN, Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), ambassadors and other aid agency representatives. The purpose of this and all the ensuing missions was to persuade government officials, donors and representatives of intergovernmental organisations of the necessity for gender sensitive and gender responsive security policy and practice, have them meet the women leaders, hear their concerns and recommendations and to call on them in their future programming. All the statements and recommendations produced during the ten missions have been compiled into a booklet.

The UN Secretary General's lament that the gender, peace and security frameworks and initiatives were not yielding tangible results ring true for this well-intentioned intervention as well. However, it is insufficient to simply dismiss the intervention because it did not succeed in getting more women to peace tables. There is a lot to be learnt from the limitations of capacity building initiatives to produce the structural change necessary to give effect to gender equality and it provides insight into why it is so difficult to achieve the objectives encapsulated in the many resolutions and policy documents. This project however had the unexpected outcome of building transnational connections between women in this region, increasing an appreciation of the commonalities of their conflicts and their gendered impacts, and of the need to work collectively to achieve the continental agenda of gender equality and peace and security.

Assumptions and Challenges

One of the early challenges that confronted the project related to internal organisational and interpersonal issues between the partners, and these led to the withdrawal of one of the main partners, SIHA. This is a common problem of collaborative projects. Partners sharing common interests enter into collaborative projects bringing different strengths, agendas, expectations and values, most of which are not clearly spelt out. 'Partners' are not equal in these collaborative efforts. It is therefore imperative to constantly reinforce commonality of purpose and realign where necessary. Fortunately, and with

a remarkable sense of organisational maturity and dedication, the SIHA board decided that their members would continue to be part of the project irrespective of the organisation's withdrawal. This incident highlighted the need for greater transparency, the building of trust and organisational and project flexibility as a fundamental part of partnerships and of working in environments in which there is heightened vulnerability and distrust.

This project was conceived of and designed without the participation of the women leaders themselves – they were viewed as 'beneficiaries.' We assumed that because the project was in the interest of women and that we – as the partners – knew what was needed we could go ahead and manage/manipulate a process that would see 'them' enabled and seated at peace tables. A hierarchical binary was unintentionally constructed: 'us,' the partners who supposedly embodied the knowledge, experience, enlightenment and 'them' the beneficiaries who were deemed less knowledgeable about the security issues in their own context, in need of guidance and of the opportunity to be put in touch with national and continental peace and security brokers. The G40 were constructed as women leaders, but essentially treated as learners. It is worth noting that participatory project design is constrained in projects that require a detailed funding proposal prior to the intervention. This apparently insoluble factor may well explain the low traction of many external projects.

The first few missions therefore had many curious participants. Many were reluctant to move away from their particular focus on development, human rights or sexual violence, to now engage in discussion about human security, peacekeeping, security sector reform, and the functioning of regional security mechanisms. The women were equally hesitant to engage government officials because they either did not think the exercise would be of use to them or they associated it with a potential security risk. They were more familiar with the donor community and some saw these 'high level missions' as an opportunity to try to direct money to their own in-country projects. The G40 also came to this project with their own agendas, which at times coincided and at times conflicted with what the project sought to achieve, and it was not long before they began to exert authority.

Many of the initial hurdles of the project were overcome. For example, although the overall goals and methodology could not be changed, participants were given the space to input into the types of skills they wanted to acquire, the content of the workshops and the choice of local consultants.

This created a much stronger sense of ownership of the project. The G40 were not neutral bystanders to the conflicts, they knew what the security issues were and what was needed to create peace and security, even if this was not articulated in security jargon. Our initial assumptions were that if we familiarised participants with the security jargon and linked this to gender related concerns before putting them in touch with the regional and national leaders, they would be enabled to participate in security decision making. Many of the project beneficiaries succeeded in familiarising themselves with 'security-speak', understood the purpose and functioning of security bodies and were able to articulate their own interests, needs and wants. This project was undoubtedly a learning curve for many of the G40 were at a qualitatively different level than when they first started in terms of their conceptualisation of security, conflict management, advocacy and lobbying skills.

However, we learned that we were working with a false assumption about why women were not participating in peace processes (broadly defined). It was not their lack of knowledge and skills, their capacity to participate, or their invisibility that were the inhibiting factors. Women are marginalised because of the way in which peacemaking and peacebuilding have been structured. Training and delivering capable women leaders to peace processes that had, no real interest in their participation, despite the agreed to frameworks, proved to be a rather futile exercise. Peace negotiations are habitually organised to bring warring parties (usually rebels, warlords, political parties and government representatives to the table) to generate ceasefire agreements, governments of national unity and roadmaps to elections. Within this hyper-masculine space in which 'hard' power prefigures who gets what, where and when, gender is unwelcome, even as an add-on. Peacebuilding has largely come to mean [re]constructing the same gender biased state and security institutions, by many of the same people that had participated in their erosion in the first place. Since peace agreements and peacebuilding programs make far-reaching decisions about the future representation, structure and functioning of a particular country and its peoples, it is understandable that women have clamored for participation in them. Women have rightfully contended that issues pertinent to them – gender based violence, dignity, representation, protection, empowerment, access to resources among other things – have to be dealt with when the blue print for the transition is being negotiated. However, even the most dedicated women activists have not sought to change

the structure and orientation of the peace process itself or the institutions involved. Rather, women have fought – perhaps rather simply – to be included in the existing structures, assuming this would make them more accountable to women. Events over the last two decades show that there is little or no political will to bring about change, and that no amount of training will open up the space for women’s participation, let alone the transformation of gender relations. This may explain why between 1992 and 2011 only 4% of signatories, 2.4% of chief mediators, 3.7% of witnesses and 9% of negotiators were women (UN Women, 2010).

Those who have studied gender and development have long pointed to the pitfalls of the gender mainstreaming approach, because it concentrates on inclusion and capacity-building, both of which overlook the reality of men’s resistance to women’s equal participation, and outright hostility to anything that might be associated with feminism. However, given gender mainstreaming’s late entry into the security discourse, it has taken nearly a decade for activists in this field to come to very similar conclusions to that reached by development studies in the late 1980s – partly because of the silos in which the respective disciplines continue to operate. Noteworthy, too, is Connell’s reflection that men are the gatekeepers for gender equality for they control the very “economic assets, political power, and cultural authority, as well as means of coercion, that gender reforms intend to change” (Connell, 2005:1802). She notes that part of men’s resistance to change can be located in the ‘patriarchal dividend,’ the threats to their identity that occur with change and the continuing ideologies that value male supremacy (in religion, culture, organisational mission, etc.) (Connell, 2005: 1811). As far back as the early 1990s, Cynthia Cockburn (1991) pointed out that men resist organisational change either overtly or more subtly. Male resistance to gender transformation in the security sector is bound to be far stronger for here constructions of masculinity and gender power hierarchies are, in large part, constituted through the images, discourses and practices that emanate from the historically all male and masculinising environment of security institutions.

Feminist perspectives point to structural transformation as necessary for the attainment of the broader and more meaningful participation of women that is a prerequisite for sustainable peace and security. Currently, so few women are in leadership positions in governing structures, political parties, rebel groups, and intergovernmental organisations that they are not called

upon to participate in negotiations. At best, and if they push hard enough, they may be allowed in to observe. Then, too, where women are included, they generally negotiate in accordance with the interest of their respective affiliations. A rare exception can be found in the success of South African women with regard to the ending of apartheid. Here they succeeded in making an impact because women from the different political parties joined forces to advocate for the rights of women. Conflict management must entail broader processes – such as national dialogues – in which the needs, concerns and interests of the whole society can be meaningfully addressed. The current format in which access to the means of violence is the determining factor for inclusion and distribution of power and resources will never be gender representative, gender sensitive or gender responsive. No amount of capacity building will change this status quo. Therefore, women's quest should not be limited to mere inclusion into structures and processes that were not designed to deal with the broader issues of equality and human security. It should rather be to create alternative structures and processes that can be more responsive to the needs of all and in which a pan-African spirit can enable cross-border connections, important in the light of the regional dimensions of most of the conflicts on the continent. This will take more than having women's voices heard and being put in touch with the right people. The right stakeholders have heard the pleas of women many a time – they know the message packaged in its varied forms. Messaging, lobbying, advocacy, are clearly not sufficient to create the desired shift: women's participation to address issues of gender inequality and the security of women – requires nothing short of quite dramatic change in the ideological, cultural and structural conditions creating insecurities that are felt in particular ways and carried by women.

The Women's Leadership for Peace and Security was in the end, just one more project. As a project it had to meet set objectives within specific time frames, and it came to an end after just 3 years. Understandably, the women involved were reluctant to let go of the 'partners.' Even though the G40 organised themselves into a steering committee and drafted an action plan and funding proposal to continue their work after the project, the fear was that without the money they could not convene. Funds would be needed to provide the structures and support required to communicate and advocate across vast distances, and without this – given immediate challenges of their own contexts – little would be achieved. Needless to say, their fears proved

correct. At the end of it all, it seems that we had inadvertently created new forms of dependency, rather than empowering women as change agents. Three years was much longer than most projects of this nature, but clearly not sufficient for the G40 to stand on their own. Given the severity of their situations, I suspect this would have been the same even if we had continued for another three years.

The project, however, unexpectedly and despite its flawed assumptions and conceptual limitations, did create a strong sense of unity and belonging, camaraderie and sisterhood. It strengthened relations between women in the region so that they began to see themselves as a regional movement on gender, peace and security, which could reach out to similar movements across the continent. The in-country exposure to the conflicts as well as continuous updates created a much deeper understanding of the differences and similarities of what they were experiencing and enabled a collective thinking through of possible ways to deal with country and regional challenges. This type of interaction is therefore beneficial for the pan-Africanist agenda we hope to cultivate. Walking through the corridors of power and engaging the power brokers also demystified these institutions and individuals located within them. It exposed their weaknesses and lack of effective response. The women leaders we involved could see where the deficiencies, lack of capacity and ideological and conceptual bankruptcy were actually located. At the first high level dialogue many women were tentative about engaging their government representatives, as well as other stakeholders such as the UN, AU and donor agencies. By the end of the three years they were much more assertive and demanding of accountability. The project therefore added value to participating women leaders personal growth and served as a means of focusing attention on gender, peace and security in the region, but it was not, nor could it be transformative.

To bring about transformative changes in the sphere of gender, peace and security will require a multi-pronged approach that reaches all the way from individual to international levels, and targets all peace and security ideologies, structures and processes. The piecemeal manner in which we have been dealing with gender, peace and security has allowed for a mushrooming of frameworks that have minimal impact on the actual peace and security of women. The renewed pan-Africanist agenda on the continent should heed to the many calls for revisiting the current limiting institutional approaches to

gender, peace and security.

Endnotes

1. A point noted in a discussion I had with 'Funmi Olonisakin and Awino Okech in Pretoria in August 2014.
2. Also see Ayiera, E. 2010. "Sexual violence in conflict: a problematic international discourse" who problematises the normalisation of violence in conflict situations. <http://agi.ac.za/journals>
3. UNSC. 2013. Report of the Secretary General on "Women, Peace and Security" and "Global Technical Review Meeting: Building Accountability for the Implementation of Security Council Resolutions on Women Peace and Security" – Background paper produced for the UN Women Conference, New York, November 2013.
4. I wish to thank Ruth Ochieng Ojiambo for brainstorming some of the ideas in this paper with me.
5. http://www.clubmadrid.org/en/programa/project_in_action_1
6. Club de Madrid, Ibid.
7. www.isis-wicce.org
8. <http://www.sihanet.org/>
9. Although we worked for organisations, which were considered as the partners, we, as the representatives of the organisations, were responsible for the conceptualisation and implementation of the project and have to take responsibility for both its success and its challenges.

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Ama Ata Aidoo's Woman-Centred Pan-Africanism: A reading of selected works

Delia Kumavie

Introduction

In the course of her writing career, Ghanaian writer Ama Ata Aidoo has explored the challenges, hopes and dreams of African women as intricately connected to Africa's recent history, from the time of the continent's encounter with Europe, the ensuing trade in humans, followed by colonialism and post-colonialism. From the earliest works to her most recent collection of short stories, *Diplomatic Pounds and Other Stories*, Aidoo's oeuvre is a testament to her frank and direct exploration of African women's experiences in an increasingly globalising world.

This paper examines the pan-African perspective that informs Ama Ata Aidoo's body of work. It situates the author's work within the seemingly male-dominated pan-African discourse of the 1960s and beyond, by exploring her construction of a woman-centred pan-Africanism through the creation of strong female archetypes as well as her use of narratives that are both trans-national and trans-temporal. Further, it argues that Aidoo's literary work constructs a pan-Africanism that privileges African women's experiences.

From her earliest writings, Aidoo's ability to take on issues that were deemed "taboo" set her apart. She pioneered the excavation into Ghana's past, present and future by examining the experiences of women like Anowa, Esi, Sissie and Cecille. Aidoo has attributed her fascination with Ghana's unspoken past to her own early encounter with a troubling reminder of slavery: the Cape Coast Castle. In a conversation with Micere Githae Mugo, Aidoo, describing the emotions of her encounter with the slave castles of Cape Coast, says: "I think I was kind of traumatised and I couldn't get the story out of my mind" (Mugo 2010: 34).

It is plausible that this event in the life of the young Aidoo was to inform her engagement with the larger destiny and experience of Africans both on the continent and its diasporas.

Born in 1940, to a royal family, at Abeamzi Kyiakor, a small town near Cape Coast, Aidoo attended the prestigious Wesley Girls' School and later the University of Ghana. Aidoo attributes her feminist consciousness to growing up among women whom she describes as strong because of their ability to "negotiate their own existence" (Mugo 2010: 31). She further acknowledges the influence of her mother's ability to interrogate Ghanaian society and question existing power relations and systems of authority (Mugo 2010: 33). Such strong female archetypes emerge across the span of Aidoo's work, in characters like Esi in *Changes*, Sissie in *Our Sister Killjoy* and Anowa in the play with the same title.

Further, Aidoo's feminism emanates from her insistence that her feminist consciousness is intrinsic to her pan-African ideals. Indeed, she posits that coming of age during Kwame Nkrumah's era, when pan-African ideals were powerfully articulated, exerted a significant influence on her view of the world. As a Junior Research Fellow at the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana, between September 1964 and June 1966, Aidoo was part of the flourishing debates of pan-Africanism. According to Vincent Odamtten, at the University of Ghana the young Aidoo was exposed to the "radical use of traditional oral forms and strategies" then being advocated by Efua Sutherland and others (Odamtten 1994:10). Hence, exposure to the plethora of critical debates on pan-Africanism, as well as socialist thought, among the Ghanaian educated elite in the 1950s and 1960s, enabled Aidoo to: "avoid a romanticisation of Africa's past as some exotic golden age similar to that evoked by the negritude movement led by writers as Camara Laye and Leopold Senghor" (Odamtten 1994:10). In addition, these debates became important for Aidoo's literary re-visioning of the situation of the African woman in a manner that "pull[ed] back the covers that concealed societal instability, flux, inequitable relationships, structural duality, and social indeterminacy" which constitute the "superficial layer" of contemporary nation-states in Africa (Mikell 1997:31).

In his analysis of Aidoo's pan-Africanism, the Ghanaian literary scholar and poet Kofi Anyidoho argues that in poems such as "Images of Africa at Century's End," Aidoo draws on the pan-African intellectual foundation to advocate a "self-determining Pan-African agenda for the 20th century and beyond" (Anyidoho 2012: 81). This critical awareness of Africa's intellectual history perhaps explains in part Aidoo's need to confront Africa's past head-on in her plays, *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1965) and *Anowa* (1969), and in her

collections of short stories *No Sweetness Here* (1970), *The Girl Who Can and Other Stories* (1997), and *Diplomatic Pounds and Other Stories* (2012). Aidoo's conception of pan-Africanism is similar to that offered by Ngugi wa Thiong'o, who locates pan-Africanism within the African diaspora and its political movements such as Garveyism. According to Ngugi pan-Africanism forms part of "re-membling visions and practices" that are responsible for the "most visible results" of black struggles for civil and political rights and political independence (Ngugi, 2009: 35). An example of this is the Pan-African Congress in Manchester in 1945, which is directly accredited for the return of Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta to Ghana and Kenya respectively. Pan-Africanism remained a central part of an era characterised by political struggles for independence and self-determination for all people of African descent. Almost six decades after the independence struggles, the concept of pan-Africanism alludes to the connection between Africa and its Diasporas across national, transnational, intellectual and virtual spaces. These are the kinds of connections that Ama Ata Aidoo's extensive body of work unearths and continues to explore.

Addressing the Women of Africa and the African Diaspora (WAAD) conference, Aidoo asserts her feminism:

When people ask me rather bluntly every now and then whether I am a feminist, I not only answer yes, but I go on to insist that every woman and every man should be a feminist – especially if they believe that Africans should take charge of African land, African wealth, African lives, and the burden of African development. It is not possible to advocate the independence for the African continent without also believing that African women must have the best that the environment can offer. For some of us, this is the crucial element in our feminism (1998: 47).

Aidoo expresses a vision of feminism for Africa that is both pan-African and nationalist. It is a vision that can only be realised, Aidoo suggests, by addressing the many struggles and obstacles that continue to affect the lives of African women. Throughout her literary works she continues to engage with African women's lives through characters that exemplify the struggles and triumphs of Africa and its women.

Nana Wilson-Tagoe (2007) points out the ways in which Ama Ata Aidoo situates the African woman's struggle within "larger issues of social, cultural, and economic relations", which in turn provides a "paradigm for

exploring national culture and agency". Wilson-Tagoe's analysis of Aidoo's work confirms that Aidoo's feminist agenda is located within a pan-African frame. Citing Anowa's dream in Act Three of the play, where she dreams that she is the woman whose progeny is being taken by the sea, Wilson-Tagoe points out that the fact that Anowa remains childless in the play, suggest that Aidoo deviates from the "teleological history of the nation" where the African woman is figured as the bearer of the nation's children (229). Aidoo, according to Wilson-Tagoe, creates a "differentiated female history that disrupts the homogeneity of national culture" (229). In other words, Aidoo creates a narrative that centres women's role and experiences. Similarly, Carole Boyce Davies (1994), in her exploration of Aidoo's *Anowa*, examines the ways in which ideas of home or the lack thereof reveal pertinent concepts about the marginality, constructions of the feminine, the subjectivity of the African woman, and questions of witchcraft and madness. Both Wilson-Tagoe and Davies analyse the ways in which Aidoo's work actively engages with African women's experiences within national and global systems, developing a discourse that spans national and regional boundaries.

Woman-Centred Pan-Africanism

In her 1969 play, *Anowa*, Aidoo takes us back in time to a period before Europe's colonisation of the continent. The play is set in the nineteenth century, after the abolition of the slave trade and the signing of the Bond of 1844, between the British Crown in Cape Coast Castle and the chiefs of the near-by communities.¹ The play tells the story of a young woman who, after refusing to marry several suitors, decides to marry a man of her own choosing. The couple, after encountering opposition from Anowa's family, decide to leave their hometown of Yebi and start trading in animal skins, a life which increases Kofi Ako's wealth. It is when Kofi Ako embarks on the use of enslaved labour that Anowa's distress takes over, leading to its tragic climax. Anowa's resistance to Kofi Ako's insistence on trading in humans, and her rejection of the wealth Kofi Ako accumulates through this trade leads ultimately to their tragic end. Through the character of Anowa, Aidoo explores an emerging pan-African identity, forged out of the traumatic events of slavery. In other words, *Anowa* is a play that negotiates both the temporal and spatial boundaries. It re-imagines and recuperates the past, giving salience to women's conflicted and contradictory experiences of major historical upheavals.

Carole Boyce Davies describes this form of engagement with mobility and migration in Aidoo's play as "creative theorising" (1994: 44). She explains that this form of theorising is a strategy that is central to Black women's writing. Extending Davies' notion, I argue that Aidoo's portrayal of women's mobility is central to her woman-centred pan-African perspective, through which she writes women into a historical record that has erased their presence. Thus, the agency of "creative theorising" (44) is a significant component of Aidoo's projection of feminism in Africa. Aidoo's feminism emerges from a pan-African historical legacy of African women that can be traced back to Cleopatra and Yaa Asantewaa (1998: 39-40). These women, according to Aidoo, anticipate feminist discourse; similarly, Anowa's presence in the nineteenth century offers a woman-centred perspective on that history. In other words, Aidoo's re-creation of the past in *Anowa* theorises the physical and metaphorical recuperation of the past to establish a dialogue among the past, present, and future. For instance, in the context of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, Anowa's dream (Act Three) crosses both temporal and spatial boundaries:

I dreamt that I was a big, big woman. And from my insides were huge holes out of which poured men, women and children. And the sea was boiling and steaming. And as it boiled, it threw out many, many giant lobsters, each of whom as it fell turned into a man or woman, but keeping its lobster head and claws. And they rushed to where I sat and seized the men and women as they poured out of me, and they tore them apart, and dashed them on the ground and stamped upon them (71).

In this passage, Anowa associates herself with the traumatic experience of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, which occurred in an earlier time in history. She maps slavery and the slave trade onto her physical being as though she had a personal experience of it. Anowa's dream positions her at the heart of the slave trade as the woman out of whom the men, women, and children are born, and whose progeny are seized and destroyed. The sea both represents Anowa's loss and separation from the past and connects her to the roots of pan-Africanism. Indeed, Anowa's return to this imagery in her own moment of personal crisis foregrounds the depth of the diasporic connection that Aidoo pursues in her subsequent work.

In her reading of *Anowa*, Angeleta Gouridine posits that through the character of Anowa, the victims of slavery are reclaimed and the "ghost from the past" is re-awakened (Gouridine 37-38). Gouridine's argument invokes a

kind of temporal transgression in which those who have been forgotten are given a renewed presence and a means of expression. Anowa's dream and her insistence, as a child, on hearing about the "huge houses rising to touch the skies" that were built by the "pale men" (69-71), I would argue, point to an historical memory, one which is uncannily present and refuses to be forgotten.

In a later work, "She-Who-Would-Be-King (with an apology to Rudyard Kipling)" (2002), Aidoo takes us to the future, precisely 25th May 2026, where a woman has been elected President of a United Confederation of Africa. A confederation, as a system of government, simultaneously acknowledges the need to exceed the nation-state, but also to maintain the forms of autonomy that the nation-state offers. It is significant that this potentially powerful political entity is headed by a female president. Aidoo offers a feminist pan-Africanism that precedes that of writers like Abdourahman A. Waberi, who, in his 2009 satire *In the United States of Africa*, turns the world upside down by creating a world in which a United States of Africa is the leading world power, but still male-dominated. Aidoo's pan-African narrative is more radical in her vision of a woman president.

In temporal terms, Aidoo's pan-Africanism is situated both in the historical experience of Africa and its diaspora, but also in the imagination of Africa's future. Aidoo's trans-temporality is a narrative strategy that allows her to interrogate dominant hegemonic and androcentric constructions of Africa's past and future, to provide an alternative pan-African vision that foregrounds women-centred issues.

In her most recent collection of short stories, *Diplomatic Pounds* (2012), Aidoo presents yet another female-centred pan-African experience. Here we encounter different African women who participate in the global system in various ways. We meet world-travellers such as Cecille, Lucinda Mena Esi Eshun and her friends, political refugees like Sibi, and educated African women who migrate to pursue educational goals, such as Esaaba and Affiye. These women depict the multifaceted experience of African women. As "flexible citizens" or "global citizens" they represent a transgressive pan-African discourse in which African women's mobility challenges binaries of agency and disempowerment that characterise African women's experiences. It is useful to look at these women's mobility through Ong's definition of transnationality, which draws attention to the *trans-*, which, in the words of Ong, denotes "moving through space or across lines, as well as changing the nature of

something” (2006: 4). Ong’s definition complicates the seeming “naturalness” of nationhood and nationality, and posits a new and radically subversive space where the transgressive discourses of mobility and migration can challenge entrenched performances of national life. By acknowledging the existence of such discursive and conceptual spaces of possibility, Aidoo’s work also offers a viable and “liberatory” lens through which to read women’s mobility and migratory flows as part of the pan-African experience of African women.

African women’s mobility and migration take on different forms in the stories in *Diplomatic Pounds*. The story that lends its name to the title of the collection, “Diplomatic Pounds” narrates one such experience of migration, through Ghana’s diplomatic service. Through Cecille and her family, Aidoo shows how women struggle to navigate this assumedly most privileged form of migration. Having grown up in such a mobile and elite family, Cecille as an adult develops the eccentric habit of collecting bathroom scales as a compulsive attempt to manage and discipline a body that does not conform to hegemonic standards for femininity. The bathroom scales, her mother informs the psychiatrist, are in every room, even under the chairs in the living room. The failure of the scales to control Cecille’s weight suggests a body in rebellion, resistant to the normative prescriptions that do not accommodate the actuality of African women’s bodies, or the changes that are undergone with multiple migrations. Cecille’s obsessive need to record these pounds suggests a need to discipline her migratory body as it spirals out of control.

Cecille, like the earlier Anowa, is transitioning from girlhood to into the new spatial and temporal ‘scape’ of adulthood. Cecille’s transition into adulthood is signified by her changing response to her mother. Whereas Cecille the child acknowledged her mother’s scolding about her eating habits, the adult Cecille challenges her mother by asking “what’s the point in being in the diplomatic service if one isn’t going to explore the food of other people?” (2013: 34). It is paradoxical that it is Cecille who is obsessed with the measurements, while her mother tries to exercise control over her eating.

Like Anowa’s whose deteriorating mental state is diagnosed by the chorus appropriately named “The-mouth-that-eats-salt-and-pepper,” Cecille’s mother is worried about how Cecille’s condition will be diagnosed by the migrant African community in London. For fear that Cecille will be considered mad, her mother names Cecille’s condition as a “little nervous breakdown” and in this way protects her daughter from community judgement by presenting a

milder interpretation of her daughter's behavior accounted for by new forms of displacement.

In "Recipe for a Stone Meal" Aidoo confronts this African women's negotiation of war and its effects. When war breaks out, Sibi is forced to leave her life behind and attempt to run to safety with her children. She arrives at a refugee camp, where she attempts to cook the food she receives from the aid workers to feed her children. Sibi soon realises that the beans remain hard no matter how long she boils them, and her children begin fainting from hunger. Stories such as Sibi's confirm Ada Uzoamaka Adzodo and Gay Wilentz assertion that "Aidoo's work is the site of the dilemmas of modern African nations between the personal and the public, the individual and the community" (1999: xix). Indeed Aidoo's work creates a site for confronting theories and experiences of African women across various national and transnational spaces and time. At the same time, Aidoo's works are sites of conversations and co-existence of multiple narratives and experiences that dominant theories and discourses tend to omit. Stories like Sibi's in *Diplomatic Pounds* are provocative narrative spheres through which the dilemmas of African women are confronted.

Aidoo strategically refuses to associate Sibi's experiences with a specific war or with a specific geopolitical national space. This lack of specificity suggests that the experience Aidoo narrates is not a singular unique narrative. It is one that has its counterparts in many parts of Africa, and the world. It is an experience that Aidoo chooses to narrate in sparse detail to mirror the fragmentary nature of traumatic memory. When Sibi and her children take to the "highway", it is after witnessing the brutal murder of relatives and the violent spread of war. The "highway" does not provide a space of solace and possibility for Sibi. On the contrary: it leads to the United Nations-run refugee camp where despair flourishes and death looms. It is a space that has been replicated across the continent. It is part of the experiences of the continent, albeit one that is often left out in the discussion of pan-Africanism.

Memory remains an important component of pan-Africanism in *Diplomatic Pounds*. Indeed pan-Africanism as a movement draws on the memory of a homeland and of a people displaced throughout history. The acts of remembering and re-remembering are important practices in Aidoo's pan-Africanism. Thus, when we first encounter Sibi, she is attempting to re-member fragments of her deracinated past. She says:

Her mother hails from a matrilineal clan, her father from a patrilineal, at just over thirty-five years in the prime of life, 'reasonably good-looking,' 'strong' – her description of herself for herself – a qualified primary school teacher, married to another qualified school teacher and now public schools all over the country are back at work... So what exactly is she doing here? (2012: 61).

Sibi attempts to evoke memories of her past to authenticate and establish a connection to her life before the war. The events and details that Sibi remembers point to the ways in which she chooses to account for her pre-war life. It also points to Sibi's attempt to re-establish her identity through dis-membering and re-membering the events of her past. Yet it is from this past life, too abruptly abandoned, that Sibi derives her sense of place within the world. Sibi's self-definition emerges out of her ability to connect to her lived experiences of the past. Unlike Anowa, who crosses temporal boundaries to account for her community's "forgotten" memory of the slave trade. Sibi's transgression of time through memory is to affirm her sense of self, and her identity roots her to a specific social locality.

Mobility and migration are essential components of Aidoo's form of woman-centred pan-Africanism. Saskia Sassen suggests that migration and globalisation are movements that are "embedded in larger social, economic, and political processes," such as colonialism or the existence of a diasporic community (55). Europe's complex political and historical involvement in Africa makes it an important destination for African migrants. In "Rain", "Outfoxed", and "No Nuts", we meet African women who migrate to Europe to pursue their educational ambitions. This pattern illustrates the historical, economic and political relationship between Europe and peoples of African descent. It also illustrates that the colonial relationship between Europe and Africa continues to influence personal and political decisions till date. Similarly, the family is a significant factor in African women's negotiation of mobility and migratory experiences as depicted by Aidoo. In "Rain" we find that Affiye's mobility is made possible because of her uncle's "successful" migration. This form of mobility and migration is replicated by many of African descent. These intellectuals of African origin transgress multiple boundaries to present their research to various groups of people outside Africa. In the course of their presentation, these intellectuals confront groups of African migrants who are critical of such intellectual undertakings. The irony here is not that

the migrants are critical of intellectual engagements about the continent, but that these conversations about Africa are happening in Europe (or the United States) and not Africa. The narrator points this out when she muses,

If anyone had thought there was anything odd about such an event taking place somewhere in Europe instead of somewhere in Africa, they didn't say so any time before, during or after the retreat. In any case, if they had, they would have exposed their own ignorance. For over centuries, all sorts of meetings, conferences and other caucuses crucial to Africa and her people had been organised outside that continent and most especially in Europe (2012: 85).

The narrator rightly criticises the tradition in which intellectual and political engagement that concern the African continent are undertaken in Europe. Indeed since the Berlin Conference of 1884, some of the most crucial of Africa's economic and political policies have been enacted in Euro-American localities, often without the contribution of Africans living and working on the continent. These intellectual engagements about the continent that take place in Europe are paralleled with Affiye's negotiation of her migration and mobility, ending with her return to Ghana to assist and support her family. At the same time, due to the dispersal of Africans across the world, it remains important that these discussions are taking place in various localities.

Aidoo's conception of pan-Africanism as female-centred leads her to question the homogenous understandings of the term.

This variability is reiterated across her literary work through women like Eulalie Yawson in *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, to Anowa's dream which connects her body to Ghana's history of slavery; to Sissie's commentary on her journey to Europe and her friendship with Marija; and more recently in the plethora of female characters in *Diplomatic Pounds* who transgress boundaries of space and time and social constrictions. Some have described Aidoo as "the mouth of those women who have no mouth to speak for themselves" and as "the spokesperson for Africa" (Azodo, 1999: 401). Though such broadly applicable acclamations tend to overlook the specificity of Aidoo's work, I believe that the many lessons that Aidoo's work imparts make her a voice for a feminist pan-Africanism.

Endnotes

1. The Bond of 1844 and its legal significance in Ghana's history has been contested by J.B. Danquah in "The Historical Significance of the Bond of 1844". Danquah argues that the considering the Bond of 1844 as a kind of "magna carta" is false because the wording of the document does not grant the British Crown political control over the communities described in the bond as "adjacent" to Cape Coast Castle.

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Archives and Collective Memories: Searching for African women in the pan-African imaginary¹

Brenda Nyandiko Sanya and Anne Namatsi Lutomia

Introduction

In July 1985, Nairobi hosted a meeting of over 14,000 women at the United Nations' Third World Conference on Women.² Domestic and international women's rights activists held a concurrent meeting, dubbed Forum 85. Organised by non-governmental organisations, Forum 85 served as a space for activists to oppose capitalist exploitation, patriarchal subjugation and racist oppression, and to build coalitions and develop more nuanced critical views of patriarchy, capitalism and racism in postcolonial and post-slavery societies. The event brought women from all over the world to Kenya. Notably, African women contributed directly to its planning, an action that resulted in a shift in understandings of power within the global women's rights movement. Scholars and activists who were present spoke about Nairobi as momentous not only because "it was here, unfettered by formal responsibilities, that feminists openly expressed ideas, analysed experiences, and set forth expectations for the future" (O'Barr et al, 1986: 584), but also because of the inclusion of women from Kenya and the African continent. The forum was significant, too, for the embrace of transnational black feminist frameworks, and for disrupting (if only momentarily) the notion that women's roles in national building were solely domestic and reproductive.

Yet whereas Kenyan women were central thirty years ago in championing global discourses and strategies towards gender justice and equity, there is limited archival documentation and scholarship specifically about feminism in Kenya. Some scholars have been able to excavate Kenyan women's histories and to thereby consider questions of gender politics and agency: scholars such as Kanogo (1987), writing on the Mau Mau Rebellion, Shaw (1995), studying gender, class and racial issues in Kenya, and Hay (1976), who

conducted an economic survey among Luo women in colonial Kenya. Gender has been considered as a category of analysis by other Africanists writing about Kenya who posed questions relating to gender to their respondents in the field (e.g. Oruka, 1990; Cohen and Odhiambo, 1989). However, in our view, Kenya's participation in African feminist academic spaces and networks still lags behind that of other countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda, and South Africa. Furthermore, as is the case with many African nations, much of the documentation and circulation of women's lived histories has also been limited to studies focusing on women along ethnic lines or in terms of their urban or rural locations, more in keeping with a colonial archive.

We see the archive as a location for women to document their lived experiences, and we argue that archiving has great potential to build more inclusive records, histories, and also futures, bringing the "margin to the centre" (hooks 2000). The archive has traditionally been a formal space under the purview of the state and other official institutions. However, we argue that in the 21st century, cultural production through visual and digital devices (e.g. community based work with metadata, performance) that allow for localised inventions and participation can constitute a legitimate archive too, and thus has the potential to advance various forms of democratisation by broadening the knowledge base (Maingi, 2011; Sanya, 2013). "History," of course, privileges certain narratives and silences others. Therefore questioning the content and circulation of the history of the nation becomes a necessary endeavour. Seeing that women are often rendered invisible in conventional history-making projects, we envision grassroots, national, regional and continental women's visibility and archiving in e-spaces (Radloff, 2013) as well as visual/digital projects.³ Here we would especially advocate attempts to (re)member and (re)consider women's involvement in national histories that do not privilege imagined and idealistic visions of 'African womanhood' – visions of the kind critiqued by novelists such as Ama Ata Aidoo (whose work is discussed by Delia Kumavie in this issue), Mariama Ba, Okwiri Oduor, Margaret Ogola and Nawal el Saadawi, among many others.

Collective Memories: Shaping National and Transnational Imaginaries

The notion of "collective memory" can be understood as the continuous construction of memories through shared cultural images, stories, and

conceptions of the past (Halbwachs 1992). In questioning the ways in which historians conceptualise events in national histories, the connections between memories of individuals and the social collective still remain relevant and enlightening. While archives and collective memories are not the same, they certainly are connected. Langford explains, for instance: “a photographic album is a repository of memory ... [and in turn is] an instrument of social performance” (2006: 223). Langford’s examination of the relocation of photograph collections from private spaces to the public realm illustrates how objects (in this case photographs) create new “remembrance environments” (2001; 2006). Photographs (and arguably other accessible archival documents) thereby operate as “constituents of collective memory” and as “historical markers” that allow individuals to find historical and fictive connections through which they can “imagine” where they were located in a larger community (Brennen and Hardt, 1999:7). As such, the archive is not a necessarily a physical building that contains historical documents or records. Rather it is any location, including individual homes and virtual spaces, where historical records of a place, institution or people reside.

The collective memories shared by elders, griots, and in folk tales also make up the archive. Simply put, histories of African communities are not only found in libraries, museums and national archives, whether on the continent, in former colonial metropolises and in other sites around the world. They are also located in photographs on the walls, in magazines, in cultural, political and satirical comics, in graphic novels, in text messages, in comments on Facebook,⁴ YouTube and Twitter feeds, and in blog posts. The archive is vast, exhaustive, dynamic, partly inaccessible, unsorted and, most importantly for our argument, it includes narratives of a broad spectrum of the lives and experiences of African women and men. Virtual and dynamic, the archive is also not bound by the the nation-state. This insight allows us to pose questions about the location and figuration of African women in global imaginaries. From international aid discourses to academic texts, historical documents and popular culture, for instance, we most often find African women represented in the following tropes: submissive, wise, strong, hardworking, resilient, abused, circumcised, oppressed, poor, sick, angry, hungry, needy and illiterate.

Yet a reconstituted archive allows for a dismantling of such traditional and constrictive assumptions about African women. Here, interventions by queer

of colour critiques are productive in establishing “a capacious notion of the archive by locating the quotidian within the messy physical, symbolic, and emotional arrangements of objects, bodies, and spaces” (Manalansan 2014: 94). With this, there can be an increased visibility of the women whose role in nation-building has been ignored or erased, as has their diversity. For example, Kenyan Swahili women have been involved historically in coining sayings on *kangas* or *lesos* in exchange for money or cloth.⁵ However, these sayings are not considered part of a national archive but rather as part of the commodities in question. Indeed after women submit their sayings to the cloth manufacturers, their identities are unknown and unnamed. The ability to contribute to *kanga* production provides women with a potential avenue to project their opinions and feelings, and to resist or flout patriarchal norms. Their sayings on *kangas* could therefore be recorded and valued as historical moments because they emerge from the conditions and contexts of the women’s daily lives.

A second example is the work done by Weavers, a woman-only space in which Kenyan women self-define, support and affirm their life goals, ambitions and histories (contributors to this issue). The Weavers are mobilising collectively to remember, narrativise, and reflect on their experiences. In so doing they are creating spaces such as “#weaving16” which generated a collection of voices and stories, an archive-making world-shaping project by Kenyan women” (Keguro, 2014). Explicitly and inclusively defined, the group of women rely on an ethical practice of affirming, archiving and amplifying each others’ voices and work. Using the metaphor of weaving to generate theory, memory and personal narrative, the group explains:

The language of “weaving” is a foundational claim to our cultural traditions and legacies of women working and speaking together, of collaboration and co-operation. We claim not any one method or fabric, but the practice of weaving our labour and weaving the imagination of women together, so as to make something new.

In collectives like Weavers, then, women “showcase the vexed relationships between objects, bodies, narratives and desires... as the quotidian becomes the fuel for animating capacious engagements with... ‘impossible subjects’ of history” (Manalansan 2014: 95). Such collectives challenge the privileging of patriarchal archives and archival practices; they challenge the “epistemic violence” that is the routine silencing and erasure of marginalised women (Spivak 1998; Dotson 2011).

As individuals and a collective, women on the African continent have also joined the “struggle to produce new and relevant knowledge in the 21st century” (Mama and Barnes, 2007:1) through research and documentation work, in efforts to redress inequality and ignorance about women’s lives. In a previous issue of *Feminist Africa*, Amina Mama points out that “the persistence of patriarchal hegemony across the African region has stimulated a visible proliferation of feminist scholarship and strategy, yet this is only rarely brought for collective reflection and analysis” (2002:1). Mama’s argument is important here as she raises the question of representation and inclusion. Similarly, Mama and Barnes write that “the transformative ideals of higher education remain relevant and attractive, while the condition of production of knowledge have remained deeply gendered in ways that have proved difficult to change” (2007: 4). As such Mama and Barnes (2007) point to the gains that have been made in including women in academic work while at the same time showing what challenges persist and the gap between knowledge production and circulation.

There are a growing number of organisations, scholar-activists and gender institutes such as the African Gender Institute at the University of Cape Town and Women and Law in Southern African Research and Education Trust (WLSA) that have been established to develop greater African-centred intellectual equality, including by combining academic teaching, training and research with the training of activist research networks. However, there is continued need for individuals,⁶ universities and non-governmental organisations to further create spaces such as conferences, journals, gender studies centres and institutes, for even greater knowledge formation and dissemination. As they are consolidated, such archives cannot be thought to simply complete national and transnational archives and projects. They can be revolutionary in disrupting how women in Africa are at all imagined.

Conclusion

In this standpoint, we have called for the re-conceptualisation of African archives towards a more expansive view, which includes traditional and non-traditional texts and objects, and reveals and opens up spaces while filling in the gaps that exist in national histories. Such a reconfigured archive would feature not only conventional collections such as national archives, museums, libraries but also alternatives ones, including photographs mounted on walls,

kept in family albums and, more recently, sent as SMS or circulated via Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and blog posts. This vast archive would represent a broader spectrum of the lives and experiences of Africans, and thereby reconstitute our collective memory and sense of self. And indeed, as we write, more and more Kenyan feminists are blogging, creating online platforms that document their everyday lives, and creating music that embraces the past but also reveals the dynamism of the present. Kenyan women are speaking out through newspaper and journal articles, too. Additionally, scholars like Wangui wa Goro have highlighted an archiving and documenting of Kenyan women's histories, largely collected in the 1980s and 1990s, that has yet to be published. That such work exists at the grassroots and is in many ways invisible is significant and telling. It vividly demonstrates that archiving our necessarily multiple experiences in Africa cannot happen through top-down perspectives and actions but requires integration in our education system, oral histories, popular culture, and formal and informal archival sites such as libraries and museums to name a few. We envisage archiving as a resource for research that not only shifts collective memories but influences what is taught in classrooms, that is to say our collective futures.

Endnotes

1. This work owes much to the close reading and thoughtful criticism of Teresa Barnes, Keguro Macharia, and T.J. Tallie. Many thanks also to Michael Brün, Bryce Henson, Relebohile Moletsane, Abigail N. Sanya, and Crystal Rizzo, for their critical feedback and clarifying questions and comments. We also benefitted from discussions in Chantal Nadeau's queer theory and methods course and insightful feedback given by Cynthia Dillard, Gesa Kirsch, and Assata Zerai at The 10th International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry and the 5th Annual Center for Writing Studies Graduate Student Symposium where excerpts were presented. Finally, many thanks to our generous issue editors, Amina Mama and Hakima Abass for their patience and crucial feedback, which consistently re-affirmed our desire to locate this essay on the continent even though we write from diasporic locations. While we were making final edits to this manuscript, the brilliant and engaging Kenyan folklorist and publisher, Asenath Bole Odaga, passed away. This work builds upon an archive that she generated in her close to five decades of publishing African literature.
2. The UN has organised four world conferences on women, which took place in Mexico City (1975), Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985), and Beijing (1995). Beijing was "followed by a series of five-year reviews" (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 2014).

3. We concur with Said's notion of an eclectic archive, where he writes: "the book culture based on archival research as well as general principles of mind that once sustained humanism as a historical discipline have almost disappeared. Instead of reading in the real sense of the word...distracted by the fragmented knowledge available on the internet and in the mass media" (Said, 1979, p. xx).
4. Facebook groups such as The Nigerian nostalgic project – Pre-Nigeria, as well as The Nigeria nostalgic project 1960–1980, and The Nigerian nostalgic project 1980–2000 provide platforms for Nigerians to nostalgically recollect moments in history and in so doing, they insert personal narratives into the national narrative through photographs, local advertisements and brief descriptions. These then provide a communal and collaborative public archive.
5. These multi-purpose fabrics used in everyday life among many Kenyan households often have proverbs and sayings generated by women. The saying or proverbs require cultural knowledge as the interpretation is informed by the context and existing relationships.
6. Nkiru (2002) extensively chronicled her efforts in using information technologies to promote African scholarly production and communication by establishing several online journals.

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When Exploitation is Camouflaged as Women Empowerment: The case of Malawi's first female president Joyce Banda

Juliet Kamwendo & Gregory Kamwendo

Introduction

Despite many years of struggles to get out of the malaise of underdevelopment, the African continent is still trapped in conditions that dehumanize and marginalize a large segment of the population, particularly women. The motivation for writing this paper stems from our realization that exploitation of women in politics can sometimes be camouflaged as “women’s empowerment”. This is illustrated by the experience of Malawi’s first female president, Joyce Banda, who was initially used instrumentally to advance President Bingu wa Mutharika’s ambition for a second presidential term of office. Once Mutharika had been elected, Joyce Banda was harassed, castigated and marginalized and ultimately fired from the ruling party in 2010. Despite this, the constitution allowed her to stay on as vice state president, much to the disappointment of President Bingu wa Mutharika, who had hoped that removing her from the ruling party would create room for his younger brother, Peter Mutharika, to run as the ruling party’s presidential candidate in 2014. However, Bingu wa Mutharika died suddenly of cardiac arrest in 2012, and in accordance with the constitutional provision, Joyce Banda was sworn in as president to complete the presidential term of office. In the ensuing presidential elections of May 2014, Joyce Banda lost to Peter Mutharika. Joyce Banda, while not elected in her own right, was Malawi’s and the Southern African Development Community’s first female president, and second female president on the African continent. In this paper we critically examine what this case reveals about African politics, noting that both SADC and the African Union have expressed commitments to gender equality in politics, and further declared 2015 the year of the African Woman.

At the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, there was a very deep concern with issues related to women in power and decision-

making. To this end, the Beijing Platform for Action came up with two goals. The first goal was to take practical measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making. The second goal was to increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making. These two noble goals are echoed, for example, in Malawi's policy on gender (Malawi Government, 2008), in the Southern African Development Community (2008) and the African Union (2009). As Tenthani notes:

Mutharika's decision to appoint her as his running mate for the 2009 elections surprised many in Malawi's mainly conservative, male-dominated society – which had never before had a female vice-president (Tenthani, 2012).

By choosing Joyce Banda as his presidential running mate, Bingu wa Mutharika could be seen to be advancing women's role in decision making but skeptics argue that the move was disingenuous. Mutharika's move was actually instrumental – designed to draw votes from women to take advantage of their numerical strength on the voters' register. In what follows, we examine the political landscape within which Joyce Banda's political career can be situated and the gender dynamics of her experience discussed.

Since independence in 1964 up to 1993, Malawi was a one-party state with gross abuse of human rights. Dissatisfaction with authoritarian rule eventually led to a referendum in which Malawians were asked to choose either a multi-party system of government or the continuation of the one party state system. On 14 June 1993, two-thirds of the Malawians voted in favor of multi-party democracy. On 17 May 1994, Bakili Muluzi of the United Democratic Front (UDF) was elected state president of Malawi (Posner, 1995; Kaspin, 1995). Bakili Muluzi ruled for two consecutive presidential terms from 1994 to 2004. It is during the UDF rule that Joyce Banda showed her political ambitions by serving as a Member of Parliament (MP) for Zomba-Malosa constituency. She also served as a cabinet minister in more than one ministry. From May 2004, president Bingu wa Mutharika took power from Bakili Muluzi within the same Party (UDF). However after some disagreements, Bingu wa Mutharika broke away from the UDF and formed the Democratic Peoples' Party (DPP), leading to the migration of some UDF members of parliament to the new party. Joyce Banda was one of these MPs.

Prior to becoming the first female Vice President of Malawi, Joyce Banda had a track record of fighting for women's empowerment, she also served as Minister of Gender, Child Welfare and Community Services before being

appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs. As Minister of Gender, Child Welfare and Community Services, she worked hard to enact the Domestic Violence Bill. She also designed the National Platform for Action on Orphans and Vulnerable Children and Zero Tolerance Campaign against Child Abuse. In 2009, President Bingu wa Mutharika won the hearts of many people who believe in gender justice when he chose Joyce Banda as his presidential running mate. The choice of a female presidential running mate extended Mutharika popularity and praise. The move was also seen to be in line with the National Gender Policy (Malawi Government, 2008), the Constitution of Malawi, the SADC Protocol on Gender (Southern African Development Community, 2008) and the African Union (2009). Both Mutharika and his DPP won the elections, resulting in Mutharika and Joyce Banda taking office as president and vice-president respectively. History had been made. For the first time in Malawi's history, the country had a woman as a vice-president, and hopes for having a woman president started to grow.

At some stage, the relationship between Joyce Banda and the president became sour. The relationship had become increasingly tense as the President's desire to position his younger brother, Peter Mutharika, as the next president became obvious. Joyce Banda ceased to be useful, and now had to be cleared out of the way for Peter Mutharika. Peter Mutharika had previously served as the Legal Advisor to the President and also served terms as Minister of Education and Minister of Foreign Affairs, so he was eligible to assume the position of presidential candidate for the DPP in 2014. The state media (radio and television) were utilized as campaign tools for Peter Mutharika's election to the Presidency. The public TV programme, "The road to 2014", for example was dominated by the Peter Mutharika campaign. In this programme, TV presenters went out asking DPP members and traditional chiefs whether they supported Peter Mutharika as the next presidential candidate for the 2014 elections. Joyce Banda's vocal resistance to the rise of Peter Mutharika, together with Khumbo Kachali, the second vice president of the DPP, led to her ousting from the position of Vice President of the ruling DPP party on 12th December 2010. Although she was ousted from the party, she continued to serve as the vice president of the Republic of Malawi, in accordance with the Constitution of Malawi. However, with the deteriorating relationship and increased tension, the conditions were unfavorable for the vice president to perform her duties and her full potential.

According to media reports, there were attempts to silence Joyce Banda and eventually drive her into resigning from the office of vice-president. One of the strategies included a plot to arrest her on trumped up treason charges. This, however, did not happen. Another alleged plan was to enact legislation that would empower the president to fire his/her vice-president. The Constitution does not give the president the power to fire his/her vice president. The constitution stipulates that the vice president shall hold office from the date of the administration of the oath until the end of end of the president's term of office.

What was clear is that Banda's security detail was reduced and some official cars were withdrawn from her use. Further, as Tenthani (2012) notes, she was "subjected to daily doses of derision at public rallies and on Malawi's state airwaves". A senior politician categorically declared that Malawi "was not ready for a female president" (Tenthani, 2012). The then First Lady, Callista Mutharika, joined the verbal attacks, referring to Banda as *wophika mandasi* (one who bakes fritters), in derisive reference to Joyce Banda's involvement in women in small businesses. The First Lady is quoted as saying: "She will never be president, how can a *mandasi* [fritter] seller be president?" To this, Joyce Banda responded: "Yes, she's right, I'm indeed a *mandasi* seller and I'm proud of it because the majority of women in Malawi are like us, *mandasi* sellers" (Tenthani, 2012).

The African Renaissance seeks new ways of thinking and feeling about African men and women, their histories, economic, social and political statuses. In other words, the African Renaissance should be a process towards the decolonization of the gender-biased mind, and the resolve to redress ideologies of differential power relations between men and women and the gendered socialization that continue to marginalize, oppress and discriminate against women. Women in Africa must be treated as full-fledged citizens and be given every opportunity to use their potential fully including in political power.

Ironically, at the occasion marking Malawi's 50 years of independence on 6 July 2014, President Peter Mutharika (and younger brother of the late President Bingu wa Mutharika) praised his late brother for choosing Joyce Banda as presidential running mate, saying that the appointment was a step in line with the empowerment of women. He further said: "I take it as no mean achievement that in the first fifty (50) years of our independence,

Malawians have had a female president, Dr Joyce Banda” (Dumbula, 2014). It is clear that the choice of Joyce Banda for presidential running mate in 2009 was a well-calculated political maneuver that was aimed at assisting Bingu wa Mutharika to win the votes, in the context of a global discourse favoring the empowerment of women in leadership. Once in power, Bingu wa Mutharika’s unceremonious shift towards Joyce Banda underscored the way political systems treat and instrumentalise women.

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Malawian newspapers

Malawi News

The Nation

Daily Times

Nyasa Times

Malawian radios

Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC)

Radio 2 FM

Zodiak Radio

In Conversation: Weaving Pan Africanism at the Scene of Gathering, *The Weaving Kenya Women's Collective*

Ta Imaaagini!

Ta imagini that
you and I
and all the women
of this world
stood hand in hand
marched side by side
crossing
dividing borders
constructing
connecting bridges
shattering
binding chains
creating
delinkable links
across the nations
across the continents!
– Micere Githae Mugo

What is important to us matters. We matter. How we feel and think and desire matters.
– Pumla Dineo Gqola

To whom do theorists speak?
– Carole Boyce Davies

Sound into Space

* Your email has been sent *

The year is 2014. President Barack Obama of the United States is “the most powerful man in the world.” The African Union, formerly the Organisation of African Unity, is celebrating its 50th year. Lupita Nyong’o has been installed as the most beautiful woman in the world by global acclamation.

The year is 2014. In the United States, black men continue to die the deaths of the disposable. In Africa, the African Union licenses African presidents to commit war crimes with impunity. Egypt convicts Al-Jazeera journalists for doing their job and sentences them to long prison terms. “Corrective rape” in South Africa leaves women’s corpses in the streets. Boko Haram kidnaps hundreds of schoolgirls. An Ebola panic thrusts already precarious lives into greater vulnerability as the need for medical services rises sharply away from its availability. In Kenya, an ethnic-cleansing exercise disguised as a security operation incarcerates thousands of ethnic Somalis in the Kasarani Sports Stadium, deports some to refugee camps, repatriates others to Somalia, and alienates many of them into exile.

[A]t the centre of Kenyan social and political culture [stands the phallus,
as a literal and symbolic signifier of power.

– Grace Musila

What might it mean to chart imagined communities that sutured, rather than excluded, acknowledged the critical linkages between and contributions of women rather than re-inscribing the phallogocentric erasure of women? What alternatives futures become possible by taking seriously the world-building but quietly routine mycelium of women’s networks and relationships, instead of remaining incarcerated in the fractured dystopias of the AU’s cabals?

I have wondered why very little of what we write has to do with our
ordinary lived realities.

– Oyeronkwe Oyewumi

If you ululate, they will come.

Akitelek Mboya: I’m here!

Aleya Kassam: Thanks!

Dayo Forster: iPads and my chubby fingers don’t mix well.

Garnette Oluoch-Olunya: I am here!

Kerubo Abuya: Nipo pia!

Marziya Mohammedali: Here!

Mshāi Mwangola: ‘Mshāi!’

Ngwatilo Mawiyoo: It’s 3 a.m.

Wambui Mwangi: Aha!

Wangui wa Goro: Unleash, unleash!

Wanjiru Kamau-Rutenberg: I’m here, too!

The whole factual world of human affairs depends for its reality and its continued existence, first, upon the presence of others who have seen and heard and will remember, and, second, on the transformation of the intangible into the tangibility of things.

...

The political realm arises directly out of acting together, the “sharing of words and deeds.” Thus action not only has the most intimate relationships to the part of the world common to us all, but also is the one activity which constitutes it.

– Hannah Arendt

Where is “here”?

“Here” is everywhere the ululation finds a resonance and creates a “sharing of words and deeds.” Thus, “here” is a space of transformative collective possibility, where it is possible to “act together” in articulating our world. “Here” is wherever you are standing when you turn *toward* the ululation, and in turning, arrive at the part of the world “common to us all.”

Weaving Kenya is a feminist collective formed in 2012 as a staging ground for women’s collaborative and cooperative creativity. In a cyber-space anchored in Nairobi, a group of Weaving women convene a virtual round-table on ‘*Pan Africanism, Diaspora and Gender*’ to revisit ideas of belonging and identity, and to see what happens if we take our own lives, our own experiences, and our own memories seriously as a mode of being-in-the world.

Wangui: For a person without food and shelter, or for a person with more than enough food and shelter, these may not be immediately pressing questions. But for those whose task it is as thinkers or creative people, whose life-work is to find explanations, solutions, or answers for the more intractable problems of our time, these issues remain of interest to us in their philosophical and material forms.

The future of our world may depend upon the ability of all women to identify and develop new definitions of power and new ways of relating across differences. The old definitions have not served us, nor the earth that supports us. The old patterns, no matter how cleverly arranged to imitate progress, still condemn us to cosmetically altered repetitions of the same old exchanges, the same old guilt, hatred, recrimination, lamentation and suspicion.

– Audre Lorde

Mshai: The story-teller endeavours to make something new—to create or fashion anew—out of that which already exists. The intention is always to shed new meaning, to arrive at new knowledge or insight, to make those who engage the story, or who are part of the story-ing process, perceive something new, to become conscious of something even in that which is most familiar.

The language of “weaving” is a foundational claim to our cultural traditions and legacies of women working and speaking together, of collaboration and co-operation. We claim not any one method or fabric, but the practice of weaving our labor and weaving the imagination of women together, so as to make something new.

Space into Ground

Kenya's official languages: English, Kiswahili and Silence.

But there was also memory

– Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor

Ngwatilo: Whatever is African about me has to be able to have and articulate its identity. It has to come with its own narrative and aesthetic, one that can stand revision, and it has to come with its own “mental space,” with *grounding*.

This grounding is the call. The call is that to which one turns, and in turning, finds oneself standing on the ground of the call. Here, then, we treat the propensity of women to show up for a work of community labour as the work of a spatial extension of community itself. The spatial reach of the sound is the radius of the community. The ululation does not merely travel across its own diameter: it gathers the trajectory to itself and transforms it into a mode of its extension.

We follow Audre Lorde in transforming silence into language and action—articulating, validating, affirming, performing, and supporting diversity, even as we celebrate communality.

–Mshai

A ululation, properly understood, then, creates a central point for a sonic navigation of a community of those within hearing, or those who present themselves in the present. This is the first act of the political: the action of gathering toward each other, in a gestural demarcation of a “here” able to generate its own temporality by shaping a workable past and a livable future from the resonance of its present articulation.

There’s a conjuring going on.

– Nalo Hopkins.

For Weaving Kenya, ululation is an epistemological stance as well as an ethical one because it is a breaking of silence, a resistance to enforced norms of decorum, an often joyful noise, an always powerful intervention, a way of calling out and answering yes to each other, and, sometimes, a way of grieving. Even when a ululation is one of lament, however, *to be heard* lamenting is to create a community from an audience bound by a shared signal. Those who hear themselves addressed show up. Sometimes, they show up *in* the address.

We ululate in order to animate our “we” with attention and participation, to claim and to call up the generative dissent, creative refusals, and critical discourse that we claim as a collective legacy of feminism. If ululation makes a space in-between those who know themselves addressed by the sound, it simultaneously creates the grounds for the addressees to call to their other communities of belonging, in their turn. These relationships are part of the ongoing work of building a sharable world. These are the architectures of our world(s).

“She” wraps herself around tar and brick, around wooden scaffolding.

– Heba Amin and Akitelek Mboya

Architecture

Mshai: In this space, I want to share how sister-souls come beside us to lighten the load we are carrying and walk alongside us on the difficult patches of our journey – their presence is the grace that helps us get through those rough patches.

I had been in Melbourne for my Masters, and in January 2008, I left for Ghana to participate in a fellowship divided equally between the University

of Ghana and Northwestern University. Since I had to get my US visa from my home country, I stopped over in Kenya. I was excited to see my family, as I had not seen them for two years. I did not know it was a grace-trip to farewell Dad. Dad was in hospital at the time. In the way families shield those living in diaspora from these things, I had not really been fully apprised of his condition, and it was a shock to see the “Daddy” I had left behind – the man who was strong enough to take on the whole world – so frail.

My friend Charity invited me to spend a night at her place. When I got there, she offered me the gift of either talking about what was happening around me, and to do whatever I wanted, laugh, cry, reminiscence, rage. Or, I could shut out the realities outside the house for that one blessed evening. I chose the latter. I can’t remember what we cooked, only that it was made delicious by her quiet caring. Then we sat up and watched a video. It was that silliest of comedies, *Father of the Bride*. I laughed and cried and it was not about the movie at all but about something I could not express. Then we sat up for most of the night and talked. I can’t tell you about what. The next day I left with the gift of that precious, life-shaping interlude.

Dad died about a month later, when I was in Ghana. My family did not want to send the news directly to me, so they e-mailed Prof. Kofi Anyidoho. Prof. and Prof. Sandra Richards from NU, the two preceptors of our institute, who broke the news to me. Sandra Richards, my first African American big sister, held me in that first instance of telling. I must have cried. I must have said something. All I remember is that she put her arms around me and provided comfort. That day, the other fellows on the programme taught me a new dimension to pan-Africanism: beyond our different passports and histories, it was a relationship of care. They held in that first mad wave of grief.

To this day the only way I can describe it is that it felt like I was a room full of furniture and someone suddenly pulled the carpet on which it all stood from under the legs of it all and everything went crashing over, scattering contents of drawers and tops all over the room. It would be months before I gathered it all again together, before I began to put together the room without the comfortable cushioning that the carpet had provided, before I got used to the bareness of the exposed floor and realised I could—and would—live without it, and survive, even thrive. But those first moments, that group of fellows closed ranks around me and held me together.

The sister to my heart—Jean—was in France. That December—this was in February—Jean forwent her regular trip home to Kenya to come instead to Australia where I had returned, knowing how difficult that first Christmas would be. 25th December is Dad’s birthday. At the most difficult times, when I just could not find it in me to be nice or happy, Jean took the brunt of it. She loved me through it in a way I had no idea I even needed. She made it possible for me to get through that first Christmas of the rest of my life.

Years later, I happened to be in Kenya over summer, and ran into her family, who told me her father was in hospital. I went to visit, and just before I left, he asked me to pray, “because it will be like having Jean here.” I got a call the next day—he’d gone, before Jean was able to arrive from France.

cracks gently ease together
 I temper our scars with gold
 You whisper our story, trace
 a path to a yearning truth
 we breathe. Our fractured souls
 glimmer in the moonlight.
 – Marziya Mohammedali

Gr(ou)nding to a Halt: A Method of Interruptions

Make it find to out what your own hands are good for.
 – Shailja Patel

What difference does gender make?

We need to think of feminist transnational practices as a way of re(encountering) what is already encountered, in the very crossing of national and regional borders.
 – Sara Ahmed

We start to work, but we are interrupted. We stop. We start again. We re-start, stop, start, stop. Delays, emergencies, exhaustion, children, hospital visits, equipment breakdowns, competing deadlines, travel and family schedules.

En considérant le travail non rémunéré des femmes comme un 'travail familial' dans le cultures de rente effectuées par les homes, dans les 'activités de subsistance' (de la culture à la transformation des cultures vivrières à l'approvisionnement en eau et en combustibles) et dans les tâches domestiques (entretien des enfants, cuisine et ménage), les études

féminines et la recherche féministe ont aidé à faire prendre conscience du fait que le travail salarié et la production de marchandises ne constituent pas les seules formes de travail qui existent ou qui contribuent à donner de la valeur.

– Ayesha Imam

Garnette: August is the school holidays. The children are at home all day.

Wanjiru: [Distant sounds of frenetic schedule]

Eleven Weavers answered the ululation but only nine arrived. Two were arrested along the way by the exigencies of life: interruptions that subvert work and good intentions, obligations that stretch capacities to breaking point, and attachments that distribute the self between duty and desire.

We draw attention to these absences not only to mark our loss of a certain intellectual energy, but also to suggest them as paradigmatic of the quotidian forces that separate women from the world of appearances. This dis-appearance has significant historical effects:

Is it not possible that there were more key women figures in this pan-African history, or simply that many have gone unrecognised? . . . [S]cholars have not sufficiently turned their attention to the lives and contributions of women.

– Hakim Adi & Marika Sherwood

Kerubo: There was a power cut from Friday to Monday.

Wambui: There was a power cut as I was writing about power cuts that interrupt writing.

Those who arrived at the digital convention were reminded again that contemporary social formations are cyborg and multi-element assemblages containing and depending upon many inanimate and inorganic elements. The relatively small group of women in Africa with access both to electricity and the internet are often reminded of the precarity of our privilege by the frequency and caprice of its withdrawal.

There is another power cut. We finally get it: *There will be interruptions.*

Marziya: KPLC means Kenyan People's Lamps and Candles

Our woven worlding is a mark of social specificity at a time when most women in Africa are still awaiting the opportunity to complain about interruptions in electrical supply.

Interruption becomes important: a rhythm. Sometimes we are the interruption. Sometimes we are interrupted. Some of these interruptions

are planned. Some of these plans are interrupted. We learn to work in and through interruptions. We watch the work of the interruption. We weave interruptions into the work. We work interruptions in, to do work, to perform a labour.

making a poem
 we hadn't a shape for
 layering improvised harmonies
 onto an unscored page
 – Shailja Patel

The interruptions prevented us from having a system, as they disorganised its patterns and linear formations and placed us instead in an unpredictable field of conversation.

These in turn produce what can be identified as a “new space, an area of transformation and change where we can no longer accept a factual or natural account of history and culture, nor simply seek to retrieve a hidden authentic identity.”

– Carole Boyce Davies

Interruptions create hitches, glitches, pauses, enigmatic aporias, uneven patterns, momentary disturbances, a small turbulence. Voices overlap, weave in and out, over and under, confirming, questioning, calling: creating space, making small spaces into which might slide an elsewhere, an Other, a “something-else.”

We summon women who speak of un-homing, dis-placements, border crossings, bodies out of place. We call them to interrupt us, to intervene, to erupt amongst and between us. Summoning them disrupts the bounded configurations of our conversation, crossing, and re-crossing the boundaries between our many “heres” and “theres,” and dissolving and recombining our sense of “them” and “us.”

The words name, stand alone, relate, reduce themselves and build as they speak critically, signify, oppose dominance.

– Carole Boyce Davies

These women interrupt our preoccupations by intervening with sometimes dissenting constructions of “Africa,” of “woman” of “Blackness,” of “Pan Africanism,” and of “Africa.” Together, we trouble citational conventions, the structures of bibliographies, the fraudulent smoothness of textual and rhetorical linearity, the space of the page, our own voices.

This includes not only the diversity embodied in and articulated by African/black women but also in other feminist intellectuals whose commitments are similar to our own—Trinh Minh-ha, Chandra Mohanty, Gloria Anzaldúa, Purinma Mankekar, and so many others.

– Mshāi Mwangola

We learn to see the interruptions as openings and leakages, leading in new directions, or as remnants and revenants, returns of the unreconciled. There are many forms of interruptions, at one extreme of which are the forces structuring social precarity, displacements, and un-homing.

Routes into Memory

–How do we experience these locations as both situations and interpolations? How do they impress upon our lives as embodied persons?

What is it to inhabit a world?

– Veena Das

Discourses of sisterhood and “Africa” imbricate us, interpolate us, interpellate us, call us home to injury. We probe the soft spaces of vulnerability and grief, the still-aching losses, separations, dispossessions, dislocations and disorientation.

To bear witness

– Mshāi Mwangola

To bear witness

– Meida McNeal

To bear witness

– Renée Alexander Craft

To bear witness

To call up memory, consciously respecting its power to heal as well as to hurt

– Meccasia E. Zabriskie

Five Stories

I. Wangui: I have had chemo three times in my life, and each time I lose my hair, all of it. It feels like a loss of a tooth that will never return. The baldness of chemo is unlike any other. The follicles fall from the root, so that rough undergrowth is missing. You long for the tug of the comb, and the crunch, crunch that you hear as you comb it.

Your head is so smooth, no scarf will sit on it, and those turbans, am I going to wear one? They are worse and will draw attention. Then you will have to talk about it. Console people. Do I go bald and shock and annoy?

You hear strident voices speaking about hair and you keep quiet, swallow, when they say you should not straighten your hair, or perm it or wear a wig. The righteousness gets my goat. I was like that once.

I think of hair differently now.

Now, I don't know what lies beneath people's clothes or heads. Maybe they are carrying bigger burdens than Afro-centrism. They are fighting for their lives and the little dignity a wig can afford them. They should be allowed them.

I take a photo of me before the follicles fall off. They want to match the length.

The textures here don't reflect me. Maybe they think only white women get cancer. I will go to the Afro-shops, and buy myself a wig, nay, wigs, lots of them. I am feeling sexy, outrageous. Lets go red! It will be a couple of weeks before I wear it, and it too slips off so you have to wear netting that holds it into place.

All those Afrocentrics will go ballistic: *Wangui wa Goro is brainwashed!*

Wigs have become a healing part of me now. I look at women's heads and wonder. The more daring the wig, the more I feel I understand.

Black women survive these climes in weaves or wigs or perms, trying to blend in.

The absence of any standard languages of pain is perhaps symptomatic of the fact that I cannot separate my pain from my expression of it—another way of saying this is that my expression of pain compels you in unique ways—you are not free to believe or disbelieve me—our future is at stake.

– Veena Das

Let's face it: we're undone by each other. And if we're not, we're missing something.

–Judith Butler

II. Marziya: A typical Saturday morning in the city of Perth, only interrupted by a man who walks up behind you, and unexpectedly shouts, “Terrorist!”

Your first reaction is to jump away from where you are standing. Somewhere in your mind, you know you should be taking note of what he’s saying, should be walking away. You’re not quite sure how to react.

Without really thinking about it, you turn on your heel and look at him, exclaiming, “What? Where?”

You feel half-dried, worn-out, alone, trying to understand the labels that have been slapped on you: Muslim. Woman. Kenyan. Pakistani. Student. Hijabi. Oppressed.

Headstrong. Struggling.

Lost.

[T]urning back evokes not so much the idea of a return, as a turning back to inhabit the same space now marked as a space of destruction, in which you must live again. Hence, the sense of the everyday as the sense of something recovered.

– Veena Das

when trees die

all small hearts break

...

all life becomes danger

how to find

another place

where all is not

yet barren.

– bell hooks

III. Kerubo: I awoke to information that the beautiful palm tree at the front of my parents’ home had been cut down. Yes, I am mourning a tree. She was beautiful, elegant, and just so visually enchanting.

I loved her. I thought about her all morning/afternoon. I cried in the

shower. Yes, I did.

I was informed that four trees that had been clipped would also be cut down soon. I vehemently protested.

Something silently reminded me that I am an unmarried Omogusii woman who lives in her parents' home. In coded silence, I remembered that I am not supposed to complain. After all, the men of the home had endorsed the cutting of the palm tree. She belonged to them. This is their home. Not mine. I have no claim to the palm tree. I really don't belong here.

IV. Saidiya Hartman: A pattern of collegial joking and teasing had developed over the course of our first weeks together. Ninety percent of the remarks began "You South Africans," "You Nigerians," "You Ghanaians." But whenever I entered the circle I was greeted by an awkward silence, either because my colleagues didn't know what to say or because they feared I would be insulted if they called attention to my difference, which was charged for all of us, especially in the context of our collective investigation of slavery. My presence tainted the glory of pre-colonial Africa. I was the disposable offspring of the "African family," the flesh-and-blood reminder of its shame and tragic mistakes. When behind my back my colleagues grumbled "those Americans," I didn't discern any tenderness or affection, only ridicule and envy.

[N]one of my colleagues . . . gave much thought to the way their history was enmeshed with mine, nor did they entertain the idea that the Africa in my hyphenated African-American identity had anything to do with their Africa. They made it clear: Africa ended at the borders of the continent.

V. Akitelek: My family, numbering in the mid hundreds, was displaced from their land in Saboti, Trans Nzoia, in the 1992 post election violence. During the clashes my grandparents' house was burnt to a crisp. I would have been just a few years old then but the events of this time are some of my earliest memories. This is the point at which my life began.

The only thing they salvaged from this particular attack was a shiny red chair from my grandmother's house. Fake leather, ruby red. My grandmother died a few months later. My mother says she died of distress over the lives she had lost through the destruction of her objects. This shiny red chair represents the testimony of my grandmother's life, and the symbolic lives of all my family.

The pivotal experience of my life was one in which objects were lost. I don't keep things. I have no fabric, no trinkets, no jewellery handed down, no books. I have never kept anything that could be physically taken from me. The things I do have I dispose of as soon as I start to attach to them.

Our first pass at a transnational sensibility tended to produce ambivalence at best and hostility at worst as if we, too, did not know what happened at the end. However, when we arrived at the end of our conversations we found new layers of resonance waiting there for us. In revealing our scar tissues from the injuries of un-homing suffered even by those who are "at home," we re-collected networks, reprised friendships, and remembered acts of grace described in such detail that they gathered us in to the re-collecting grief and into a memorialised gratitude.

The Complex Order of Community

When we entered this conversation, Akitelek Mboya was journeying West across the Sahel; when we reached its official end she was crossing from North Africa to Europe. Until we started on this conversation, she had not read Carole Boyce Davies' work on the transgressive writing of border crossings women. Akitelek read it for the first time as she was crossing borders herself, and navigating the abyss between abstract Pan Africanisms and the fleshy menace of African customs officials. Afterwards, she said,

Akitelek: You were right. [Carole Boyce Davies] is changing my life at every turn.

The "carrying of ideologies" is the final iteration of "ordinary" Pan Africanism. Ideologies are carried by and through persons embedded in overlapping networks of belonging. By 'ideology' here we mark not a political platform but a way of relating of being

In-relation with.

In this room, for one hour

Let's be easy in our skins

Observe ourselves

With gentle curiosity

Proffer and accept

Selected morsels of our lives.

– Shailja Patel

Dayo: My current emotional journey has as much of a bearing on the things I will say and how I will say them. As my mother pointed out to me yesterday, I left her 30 years ago, when I was eighteen. Just that statement makes me want to cry. She's giving me advice about how to let go of my son, who is now nineteen, and about to go to university. He's been on a gap year and we've spent a lot of time together in the past year bonding. I am about to let my son—remember when he fell out of the high wardrobe cupboard at 3, when he got concussed from rugby, how his terror of mannequins developed from the enthusiastic clown that chased him in Abidjan, how he used to dance with forefingers pointing outwards to keep the beat until we laughed it out of him—go.

The story began long ago . . . For years we have been passing it on, so that our daughters and grand daughters may continue to pass it on. So it may become larger than its own proper measure, larger than its own in-significance. The story never really begins nor ends, even though there is a beginning and an end to every story, just as there is a beginning and an end to every teller.

– Trinh T. Minh-ha

We introduced this woven engagement with the question of Pan Africanism by presenting and attending to four intertwined ideas of “being here” or being “present”: locale, location, located-ness, and localisation. We foreground the individual and specific geographical locations from which we think and write because the sights and sounds and smells and sensibilities of being in place also structure what we think of as ‘our’ place. We mark that that our collective re-articulation and representation of these diverse spaces, places, and situations is a practice of ‘worlding’ and by implication, also one of mapping our imbrication in the diverse situational and generational interpretations of an imagined continental or global community.

Genealogies that not only specify and illuminate historical and cultural difference but also envision and enact common political and intellectual projects across these differences constitute a crucial element of the work of building critical multicultural feminism.

– Chandra Talpade Mohanty

We underscore the attachments, affiliations and sutures of belonging, often forged in the direst moments of our migrations and re-crossings, as the anchors of one ephemeral mapping of the world. Similar mapping-networks

are iterated multiple times in the relationships through which women build and memorialise a world, patterning and archiving it in a repository of material artifacts and remembrance.

All that you touch,
You Change.
All that you Change,
Changes you.
– Octavia Butler

Mshai S. Mwangola is a member of Weaving Kenya and of *The Quilt*. Wangui wa Goro and Carole Boyce Davies have been friends for years. Carole Boyce Davies taught Mshai Mwangola in graduate school. Shailja Patel is a member of Weavers. Shailja Patel and Amina Mama are friends. Amina Mama came to Nairobi and caused this Weaving to appear. Akitelek, during her travels with *Invisible Borders*, travelled from North Africa to Europe and met Jean Thevenet, who is “Mshai’s Jean,” in France. Dayo and Wangui met in England for the first time during this conversation.

I have been unprotected. I have been naked and exposed. I have been clothed and armoured. I know what I carry in my suitcase. I carry my history. I carry my family. Over my saris, I wear my sisters.
– Shailja Patel

Evocations: Calling Criss-Crossing Community

We began with a ululation. We end with an evocation. We call up the women who have sustained us, inspired us, accompanied us, comforted us, befriended us. Those who embrace and hold us, those whose writing enlightens us and whose music moves our bodies in synchrony and syncopation, those who feed, and hold and nurture us, those whose thoughts we invite to mingle with ours, women we love and learn from. If the ululation is a space-making gesture, the evocation sutures us to lineage of feminism that extends across the world and across time. If the ululation creates and affirms our community, our evocations memorialise and affirm the many worlds that we inherited and the many worlds that we have made together with women around the world.

Abby Lincoln, Abena Busia, Abiola Ogunsola, Assia Djebar, Akua Gray, Alice Walker, Ama Ata Aidoo, Amina Mama, Angela Davis, Angelique Kidjo, Antoinette Handley, Anumbai Patel, Aretha Franklin, Asa, Aseneth Odaga, Asma Mohamed, Abdel Halim, Atsango Chesoni, Ayesha Imam, Azadeh Moaveni,

bell hooks, Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, Busi Mhlongo, Buchi Emecheta, Carol Boyce Davies, Caroline Wanjiku Kihato, Cedella Marley, Chelagat Mutai, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Doreen Baingana, Edwidge Danticat, Efua Sutherland, Elizabeth Orchardson-Mazrui, Ellen Kuzwayo, Erykah Badu, Fatoumata Diawara, Gcina Mhlope, Georgia Ann Muldrow, Gloria Naylor, Grace Jones, Grace Ogot, Grace Onyango, 'Funmi Olonisakin, Hazel Carby, Heba Amin, Hope Azeda, India Arie, Jamaica Kincaid, Jill Scott, Jita Allen, Kara Keeling, Kelly Coate, Khadja Nin, Laura Mvula, Lauryn Hill, Maisha Auma Eggers, Margaret Ogolla, Mariama Ba, Mary J Blige, Mary Muthoni Nyanjiru, Marjorie Oludhe-Macgoye, Matlhogonolo Maboe, Maya Angelou, Mariama Bâ, Mbilia Bel, Mekatilili wa Menza, Melissa Williams, Micere Mugo, Miriam Chemmoss, Miriam Makeba, Miriam Were, Mkawasi Mcharo Hall, Molara Ogundipe-Leslie, Monica Arach, Moraa wa Ngiti, Mumbi wa Maina, Mumbi Kaigwa, Muthoni Garland, Muthoni Likimani, Muthoni Wanyeki, Mwana Kupona, Nadine Gordimer, Nalo Hopkinson, Nahid Toubia, Natasha Jafri, Nawal el Sadaawi, Ng'endo Mwangi, Nina Simone, Nkiru Nzegwu, Nourbese Phillips, Obioma Nnaemeka, Nozipo Maraire, Oprah Winfrey, Oumou Sangare, Penina Mlama, Patricia Collins, Patricia Williams, Phoebe Asiyo, Pumla Dineo Gqola, Rasna Warah, Rebecca Njau, Rita Marley, Rokia Traoré, Sade Adu, Sade Auma Adeyemo, Sandra Richards, Seble Dawit, Sharon Dean, Shailja Patel, Sitawa Namwalie, Sonia Sanchez, Sweet Honey in the Rock, Suki Ali, Susan Kiguli, Suzanna Owiyo, Sylvia Tamale, Thandiswa Mazwa, Titi Layo C. Harrison, Toni Morrison, Violet Birungi, Wambui Otieno, Wangari Maathai, Wanjiku Kabira, Wanjiru Kihoro, Whitney Houston, Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor, Yvonne Vera, Zahara Mkutane, Zora Neale Hurston.

If you evoke them, they will come.

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Feminism, Empowerment and Development: Changing Women's Lives. Edited by Andrea Cornwall and Jenny Edwards, 2012, Zed Books, London

Sehin Teferra

Feminisms, Empowerment and Development: Changing Women's Lives edited by Andrea Cornwall and Jenny Edwards (2014, Zed Books) provides a thorough, and very necessary, examination of the empowerment model that straddles feminism and development principles and rhetoric. An output of the Pathways of Women's Empowerment research programme, a five-year project conducted by an international network of researchers, the impressive collection of conceptual and empirical research investigates the meaning of empowerment in women's lives in diverse settings.

The introduction highlights, quite brilliantly, how the feminist principles of empowerment that developed in the 1990s with a clear focus on women's consciousness has been watered down beyond recognition as a tool of the aid industry. Echoing the feminist writer, Srilatha Batliwala (1994) who has warned that empowerment is in danger of losing its transformative edge, the chapter provides a specific example of the World Bank's selective interpretation of Naila Kabeer's (1999) definition of empowerment reducing it to a measurable outcome and as something one can do for others, stripping the concept of its politics of consciousness and the emphasis on women's relationship with each other.

In many of the case studies, the programme examines the effects of interventions executed by well-meaning development agencies, drawing a distinction between policies, programmes and laws, thereby 'complicating' the narratives of empowerment. Subsequent chapters investigate other well-traveled paths of empowerment such as legal reform in Egypt (the author concludes that there is no direct path to empowerment and that processes need to be participatory), and quotas as a tool of political empowerment for women in Latin America which, while chronicling impressive, effective

feminist activism surmises that a successful outcome of more women in political leadership does not necessarily lead to the empowerment of women as a collective.

Two chapters study women's organizations in Bangladesh, drawing a picture of strategic engagement with political parties and the case of a fundamentally feminist NGO that was once defunct and has since been resuscitated, the notion of loyalty to an entity that, by most accounts provided a real path to empowerment. The chapter on Palestinian women's resistance to occupation asserts boldly that empowerment is a new concept imposed following the Oslo Agreements and pushed through "an aggressive wave of funding of projects to women's organizations"(p 200). Economic independence from men guaranteed through work in a large factory, with associated matrifocal residence and families being predominately organized around a mother and her children was observed to contribute to women's empowerment and female solidarity in Bahia, Brazil.

These case studies demonstrate that unlike the simplistic by-the-numbers approach espoused by the aid-development sector, which has largely failed to empower women while even improving their lives, empowerment is a process as opposed to a linear, measureable trajectory. Specifically, this book reminds us that empowerment is relational in terms of time – disempowerment now to an empowered future – and that it requires women's collective action as exemplified by the case studies on Brazilian domestic workers. We also note that one woman's empowerment may be another woman's oppression as discussed in the analysis of the Lady Health Workers' project in Pakistan which while largely lauded as a successful economic empowerment initiative for participating women resulted in many of the daughters or sisters-in-law of the health workers taking up more household chores to make up for the absence of 'Lady Health Workers'.

In addition, *Feminisms, Empowerment and Development* teaches us to pay attention to context. As the research by Akosua Darkwah shows, for older Ghanaian women, education provided a pathway to empowerment, while for younger women, the contemporary labour market has expanded women's means. Representation as a feminist issue was highlighted by the dilemma faced by Bangladeshi activists in the characterization of acid-attack survivors as non-victims. In terms of strategies, tactical accommodation and compromise with the state-aid industry machinery by 'feminist bureaucrats'

engaged in gender mainstreaming is analyzed in one of the case studies.

Furthermore, what the editors refer to as 'hidden pathways [to empowerment]' were investigated by the Foucauldian analysis of religious education classes studied by Neelam Hussain in Pakistan and by the qualitative analysis into television watching as an unlikely avenue to empowerment for poor women in Bangladesh in order to help the reader conceptualize empowerment outside the development box.

There is contained within this book, a wealth of feminist critique of 'empowerment lite' (Cornwall, 1997) that greatly resonated with this reviewer who, as a feminist, has observed the same gaps in her experience of 'women's empowerment' projects in the East African region. The book re-complicates empowerment as a feminist tool, recalling its transformative edge beyond the relatively simplistic 'invest in girls and women' model employed by the development sector. Most significantly, the importance of shifting women's and men's consciousness and the process of people developing the power to act, which has largely fallen by the wayside of the rush to empower the women of the developing world, is reclaimed by this important book.

However, the volume is not without its faults. It may be considered too long, with too many case studies which because they all discuss important topics, deserve more attention than may reasonably be given to a book of such length, particularly when there is more than one case study from one country as is the case for Brazil, Ghana, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Egypt. Perhaps two volumes would have done better justice to the wealth of reflection produced by this project. Although most of the authors indicate their participation in the Pathways of Women's Empowerment programme, it would have been useful if beyond the information on contributors, the voices of the authors and their personal reflections on the respective projects they are writing about was reflected as it is in the 'Subversively Accommodating' article by Rosalind Eyben. In addition, the volume could use more thorough editing: while it is clearly written for the most part, there are more than a few typographic and grammatical errors and some sentences in a few of the narratives are too long with more than a few repetitions. In some instances, categorical statements are made without proof or a source being cited.

Some of the arguments in a couple of case studies seem obvious, particularly to a reader familiar with feminist and development discourses, which would presumably consist of a majority of the intended audience of

the book while other narratives could use more details. Lastly, a few of the case studies include non-English terms without their English equivalents, and narratives are attributed to persons whose identity is not explained.

Despite these minor mishaps, *Feminisms, Empowerment and Development* is a wonderful, and refreshing addition to the Development canon. Refreshingly feminist, the volume takes development planners and practitioners to task in getting women's empowerment back on a feminist track.

Migrant Women of Johannesburg: Everyday life in an In-Between City. By Caroline Wanjiku Kihato, 2013, Wits University Press, Johannesburg

Kerubo Abuya

Set in Johannesburg's inner city, central business district and adjacent northeast residential suburbs of Berea, Hillbrow and Yeoville, *Migrant Women of Johannesburg: Everyday life in an In-Between City* by Caroline Wanjiku Kihato concerns the stories and experiences of 11 migrant women from 10 African countries – from Nigeria to Tanzania – who crossed borders over land, eventually gaining entry into South Africa through Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Utilising the stories and self-supplied photographs of these women's lives in Johannesburg, Kihato reveals something of their daily reality by exploring their living conditions, their ability and inability to meaningfully participate in their host country, the spoken and unspoken codes for social acceptability that they face, and the rejection and turmoil they often experience. The women are of varying ages, educational and socio-economic backgrounds, and their largely desperate and dangerous journeys to South Africa were prompted by diverse circumstances, the common denominator being a search for safety and upward economic and social mobility. The book is a result of up to five years of Kihato's personal interactions with several of the women, in which she positions herself autobiographically as a "black, African, middle class migrant woman" (2013: xiv).

Kihato's account of the 11 cross-border migrant women paints a picture of hope intertwined with despair, giving readers a window into the complex lives that they and similarly positioned others lead, as well as the dignity, resourcefulness, audacity and resilience that they demonstrate while navigating the astringent spaces in which they unexpectedly find themselves in Johannesburg. The book is organised into six main chapters. The first chapter, entitled "*Introduction: Welcome to Hillbrow, You Will Find Your People Here,*" rather harshly inaugurates the work with the words: "Get out!

GET OUT!” (2013: 1), echoing the kinds of reception and sentiment that some cross-border migrant women encounter upon arrival in Johannesburg. Kihato introduces Johannesburg as a “liminal city” with a rich yet deeply disturbing history that continues to subjugate many of its residents, imperiously reinforcing historical injustices, exclusions and persecutions.

The second chapter explores relations between the state’s legal instruments and street dwellers, exposing the fluid nature of the boundaries between legal and illegal practices in the city, and how “street laws” come to be constructed and fortified. In the third chapter, Kihato considers how the migrant women constantly negotiate the new social and cultural norms and expectations that they find within their host city and migrant communities from their sending countries that they meet in Johannesburg. The women’s pressure to portray a well-to-do-lifestyle to people in their sending countries clashes with the reality of the poverty that many of them are immersed in. Chapter four takes us into the heart of the women’s private lives, concerning issues such as love, beauty, family, domestic violence as well as the politics and complexity of their local migrant communities. The following chapter gives an account of the xenophobic violence that erupted in South Africa in May 2008, weaving together the experiences of some migrants and state officials who were based at the Cleveland police station and Glenanda camp for displaced refugees. Here Kihato gives voice to the migrants’ grievances about the pain inflicted by the overbearing arm of South African state power.

In the conclusion of the book, the author argues that understanding urban processes in Johannesburg and elsewhere on the continent should transcend the “simplistic dichotomies” that continue to dominate planning and governing the African city. Her work demonstrates the blurred boundaries between the divisions – “legal and illegal,” “official and unofficial,” “formal and informal,” – which inform and shape the lives of migrant black African women at the margins of the city. She questions the selective exercise of power by state agents, pointing out systems of corruption and other injustices that keep migrant women in a constant state of want and need. She also provides insights on how the women devise strategies and tactics for survival, which ultimately makes them significant agents in the matter of how and why the ‘City of Gold’ is governed as it is. The author’s portrayal and analysis of her subjects’ day-to-day living challenges epistemologies of the city “from above” and makes a strong case for a balanced view that includes perspectives “from

below.” This is a bold move that calls on citizens, scholars, urban planners and policy makers into closer proximity with the raw conditions that many face in Johannesburg.

Kihato’s work can be situated within a broader literature on women’s migration and urbanisation on the continent, including *Women of Phokeng: Consciousness, Life Strategy, and Migrancy in South Africa, 1900-1983* by Belinda Bozzoli with Mmantho Nkotsoe (1998), and Teresa Barnes’ (1999) *We Women Worked So Hard: Gender, Urbanization, and Social Reproduction in Colonial Harare, Zimbabwe, 1930-1956*. All three works concern women who seek better prospects in the city, and who emphasise the importance of being “good” or morally upright there. The women in Bozzoli and Nkotsoe’s work migrated from rural to urban South Africa and later returned home to proud retirements, while the women in Barnes’ study followed a similar trajectory in Zimbabwe, migrating into Harare and also eventually returning to their rural origins with a sense of dignity and accomplishment. Indeed in both cases some of the women even contributed to political freedom struggles.

By contrast, many of the cross-border migrant women in Kihato’s work are immersed in the shame of their impoverished conditions in Johannesburg and believe that they would face “social death” were they to return home. This is not to suggest that the women are wholly subjugated, as they do express their voices and agency in different ways. Kihato notes that the space the women inhabit “can be empowering, providing a place of respite outside of the state’s gaze. It is a space where agency and structure are in constant interrelationship” (2014: 18).

One of the strengths of Kihato’s work is her deployment of a bold feminist methodology that mixes ethnography, narrative inquiry and standpoint theoretical underpinnings. She interviewed the women while interacting with them in the spaces that they ordinarily inhabit and at bi-weekly workshops over an extended period of time. Noting that “there were times when no words in any spoken language could have articulated the women’s feelings, memories, and ideas” (2013: 11), Kihato adds a visual component to her data collection methods in which the women took and shared pictures of their daily lives. While the women experienced this method as empowering, and Kihato used pseudonyms to protect their identity, like her, I cannot help but wonder whether the images could ‘incriminate’ any of the women in one way or another if the state were to identify them.

It is a widespread critique that South Africa has one of the most progressive constitutions in the world yet is also notorious for crime, inequality and gender-based violence. Portraying the women in her research as neither victims nor heroines, Kihato's work is situated within the broader context of systemic problems in South Africa that require urgent redress. *Migrant Women of Johannesburg* is a timely, relevant and significant work that positions marginalised migrant black African women as a group whose rights must not be ignored in the spirit of upholding universal and indivisible human rights, pan-Africanism and calls for a 21st century African Renaissance.

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In Idi Amin's Shadow: Women, Gender and Militarism in Uganda. Alicia C Decker, 2014, Athen, Ohio, Ohio University Press

Gabeba Baderoon

Like all good feminist works, *In Idi Amin's Shadow* starts by refusing conventional wisdom – which is that Idi Amin Dada was a singular and sociopathic man, whose military rule in Uganda therefore is exceptional and has no meaning outside of that country and that period. Instead, Alicia Decker uses this part of Ugandan history to craft an insightful theory of militarism and the gendered dynamics that drive it and are its legacy. Through a painstaking and comprehensive case study of Uganda under the military rule of Idi Amin from 1971 to 1979, she focuses on the way militarism constitutes powerful norms of masculinity and femininity.

She also demonstrates that Amin's militarism had a history, politics and culture that preceded it and grew out of the British colonial occupation in West Nile, and the use by Britain of its African colonial armies in brutal wars in Egypt, Sudan, and Kenya. The formation of the state of Uganda from this complex colonial history means that Amin's capture of the country through a military coup in 1971 and the progressive infiltration of militarism into the whole of Ugandan society from 1971 to 1979, as well as its lingering consequences, is made much more explicable. Indeed, we are left with the urgent question of how this case study of militarism in Uganda in the 1970s allows us to understand the transnational phenomenon of militarism today.

Into this history, a detailed and vividly rendered world is filled out and given life by the experiences of women and others rendered invisible by patriarchy and military violence. The intuition that marginalised people – those whose position forces them into the shadows of dominant society – generate knowledge that provides a fuller and more accurate picture of history, and therefore of its lessons, is fully realised here, through interviews with over 100 women and dozens of men who lived through the 8 years of

Amin's rule. This is supplemented by detailed archival research, including into commission reports that had been assumed lost from the historical record and unique material generated through patient, generous and reciprocal personal relationships that Decker developed with her Ugandan colleagues and contacts. As a result, Decker's book "ventures into the shadows" to talk about a "harrowing time" and its legacy for contemporary Uganda and the world. The metaphor of the shadows and its silences, dangers, ambiguities and lingering effects are compelling and deserves even further explication.

In this study Decker brings together two orders of social experience, those of ruler and ruled, men and women, but also elite and ordinary, official and intimate, public and private – orders of experience and meaning that are made visible and valued by feminist approaches. In fact, this book confirms the importance of an ethical and intellectual imagination unconstrained by convention for deepening our understanding of history, especially topics suppressed by political oppression. Instead, Decker asks in her book: what are women's experiences of militarised societies and how can we gain access to their voices? What is their role in the histories of political violence and in envisioning a post-conflict national memory? How does militarism both enable brutal violence with impunity, but also subject the men and women inside military regimes to militarised violence themselves? By answering these questions, In Idi Amin's Shadow teaches us, to quote Decker, a powerful insight into militarism and its "deeply gendered lessons".

Accounts of public terror, used deliberately and strategically by Amin's regime, have produced an epistemological challenge in the sense that the extent of such violence has been interpreted as a sign of insanity, barbarity and singularity and has unfortunately fed into racist ideas about African irrationality and savagery. This book instead addresses the rationality and logic behind the scale of torture and the often-public performance of stark violence used by Amin as a conscious political strategy. Harrowing as it is, the book counters the haze of myth to tell a fuller history of Uganda's history that also holds insights for us in examining militarism elsewhere.

African Feminism

There are many reasons to celebrate this book. Perhaps most importantly, Decker does justice to the place of gender, and of women, in history, particularly those who were silenced by military violence. Moreover, she does

so by brilliantly employing central African feminist concepts in her book, and placing them in relation to more widely cited and therefore paradoxically more authoritative western scripts about feminism, overtly paradoxical in instances where it is African feminists who have engaged most directly with African contexts.

But in Decker's approach we don't only learn about African concepts but about their complexity, for instance elucidating African concepts such as the relation of sex and gender as a non-biological relationship. We also find nuanced discussions of the work of pre-eminent African feminist scholars Amina Mama on militarism, Patricia McFadden on postcolonial and post-independence nationalisms, Jacklyn Cock on women's roles in militarism during apartheid and the anti-apartheid struggle, Nakanyike Musisi on gender in post-independence Uganda, Yaliwe Clark's research into post-conflict masculinities, and Nina Mba's comparative scholarship on military and non-military political regimes in Nigeria – this is a truly wide-ranging and erudite account of African feminist thought, as befits someone who holds a Masters degree in Gender Studies from Makerere University. Examples of the subtlety of Decker's approach includes an exemplary engagement with earlier scholarship, including the difference between warrior culture and militarised culture and previous gendered readings, such as Ali Mazrui's concept of "political masculinity," which have been both enabling and limiting.

However, the major African feminist contribution of this book is not only to draw on its broad archive and to expose its readers a rich African conceptual heritage but to elucidate a general theory of militarism and gender through a case study of Uganda – *In Idi Amin's Shadow* shows how militarism and state violence can become entrenched into state practices and eventually organise society around military violence as its core political principal. It traces how the logic of military violence can come to permeate a society and become ubiquitous, normalised and invisible, to the extent that people cannot imagine living differently.

Citing the major feminist theorists Amina Mama and Margot Okazawa-Rey, Decker observes that militarism is "an extreme variant of patriarchy" which generates and consolidates particular forms of gender. Militarism – which includes systemic violations of the bodies of citizens through the use of rape and sexual violence as modes of terror and the production of masculinities beholden to the military state – can nonetheless become a common and

almost “ordinary” political strategy because it is highly effective in enabling violations of governance through corruption and appropriation of resources. We also see that men who are drawn into militarised culture are nonetheless also vulnerable to it, and are in constant danger of falling out of favour, or being seen as feminine or weak. This requires ever more demonstrations of hyper-masculinity and leads to escalating levels of violence. Indeed, in Amin’s Uganda the idea of protection as a function of the state itself became despised and feminised to the extent that the police were seen as “women” who did not go to war, a contempt that “naturalised the violence and domination of militarism,” as Decker points out.

A critical view of gender and militarism is therefore crucial, both because militarism entrenches destructive forms of masculinity and femininity but also because an instrumental emphasis on women’s roles during military rule helps to obscure some of the violence of military logic by foregrounding limited advances made by some women, and promoting an idea of the military as protective, responsible and strong. Indeed, reading this, it is unsurprising to note the prominent use of the image of the family to promote militarism – Amin named himself Big Daddy, and promised that the military protects “the home” and “the ones at home”.

How can women be nurturing and yet militarised? Amin crafted a paradoxical image for promoting women’s visible participation in the state, yet was responsible for unprecedented levels of brutality against both women and men. As Decker notes, militarised masculinity demands “physical strength, endurance, discipline and heterosexual competency”, and a militarised femininity requires “nurturance, patience and support”. Because militarism is an extreme form of patriarchal gender, combat is central to generating militarised masculinity leading to heightened requirements for the exercise of violence, so the exclusion of women from the zone of conflict is required for women to support militarism “without threatening patriarchal social order”, by being symbolically central but physically excluded.

Decker demonstrates to us the danger of overlooking both the spatial and temporal dimensions of militarism – firstly, militarism has a history. Idi Amin did not spring out of nowhere. He was literally the child of a history of systemic violence perpetrated by the British during colonial rule. The West Nile, the birthplace of Idi Amin, was an area subjected to pervasive impoverishment and marginalisation under the British, leaving few options

but military service available to men. This was accompanied by the creation of a mythology of “martial tribes” – so that deliberate impoverishment was accompanied by a martial logic through the selective advancement of some Africans during colonial rule if they were deemed to be “reliable”, aligned to colonial ideology and racially advanced, and therefore given access to education and opportunities in the colonial administration, and the exclusion of others, who were described as racially inferior and relegated to poverty and military service. This was the pre-history of Amin’s military rule and helps to undercut ideas about the exceptionalism of Uganda.

Secondly, militarism seeks always to expand itself. Decker demonstrates the extension of militarisation in social and civilian life in Uganda under the rule of Milton Obote and then almost immediately under Idi Amin – for instance, through the passing of laws that allowed military control over the administration of justice such as powers of arrest and what constituted evidence, the growth of paramilitary units, the establishment of military police, the subjection of civilian officials to military discipline, and the proliferation of powerful clandestine military intelligence units, who acted with increasing violence and impunity. As importantly, the voracious reach of militarised social structure is evident in the intrusion of militarism into the psyches and over the bodies of citizens. Shortly after seizing power, Amin chose consciously to focus on what women wore and banned miniskirts as a way to legitimate and expand military power by a highly visible and popular strategy. Such strategies of diversion and populism take over the space of public debate and simultaneously enable theft by stealth through extreme levels of plunder and political violence.

To counter such a strategy of expanding state violence requires an ethical politics and courageous activism, as well as meticulous research and the reclamation of histories. Women’s and men’s insistent voices, such as in testimony before Uganda’s Commission of Inquiry into the Amin regime’s increasing use of “disappearances” helped to demonstrate that terror was a sustained and evolving state strategy under Idi Amin, and their testimony countered “the deafening silence of disappearance, indelibly recording a crime that was supposed to leave no trace.” In Decker’s interviews with them, Ugandan women and men both inside and outside the regime testified to the violence they suffered and that they witnessed, even when the effectiveness of the forums for such testimony were undermined by the regime. In Decker’s

words, the women and men “refused to be silent, giving voice to a crime that was supposed to leave no trace.” Such histories also reveal the ambiguities and ambivalences of survival under a military regime, and show that some of the strategies that women followed in a logic of political survival during military rule included uneasy silence, complicity and unevenly benefitting from the transient opportunities offered by the regime.

The proliferation of militarism is enabled by the myth of military utility as a solution to complex problems such as crime or economic inequality. The fantasy of efficient, targeted, effective military violence to address multifaceted social phenomena in fact obscures the way militarised violence exacerbates and perpetuates inequality, enables a vast scale of corruption, gendered and ethnic violence, profound psychological suffering, ethnic division and a cycle of political violence. Decker demonstrates that militarism proliferates and insinuates itself into broader forms of governance, ideology, bodily and social and intimate practices. This sense of state violence that intruded into private and ritual spaces and carried out with impunity under new laws passed by the military government has left effects far beyond 1979. Indeed, as Decker points out, a “culture of violence...became Amin’s most enduring legacy.”

This is a work of history that deliberately seeks out voices that have been left out of the formal record, contributing to the field of “history as meaning” rather than solely “history as fact.” Such a history as meaning relies on informal channels such as personal memory and Decker acknowledges that such memory can suffer from elision, fracture and inaccuracy. She outlines the meticulous research through which she established the validity of the insights gleaned from her interviews, without ceding the central feminist method of attending to the voices of those who have been excluded and silenced by the powerful. Charges of inauthenticity, partiality and insignificance are often used to obscure the violence of dominant classes, and this book counters such claims by buttressing its use of women’s and marginalised men’s voices through exhaustive archival and documentary evidence.

In describing the terrifying arbitrariness of opponents and ordinary citizens who were kidnapped or subjected to unexplained arrests and detention after which they were never seen again, Decker uses a noun as a verb – to be “disappeared” – which has travelled across postcolonial contexts from Latin America, and cites an unforgettable phrase from the Ugandan activist Thereza Mulindwa, who asserted that the country’s women had become “widows

without graves.” These resonant terms suggest the need to create new concepts to describe repeated acts of state violence which had no precedent and crushed legal opposition. They also show the value of a comparative approach, for instance, for understanding militarism in other postcolonial and post-revolutionary states like Egypt and South Africa. Importantly, for scholars based in the north, Decker’s study of the unexceptional case of Uganda can allow us to understand better the “soft militarism” of non-military yet still militarised states, like the US.

Conclusion:

Decker has produced a subtle, important, theoretically innovative and elegantly written study that centralises feminist thinking and shows why it matters. Phrases like “the utility of violence” and “the militarism-masculinity nexus of Idi Amin’s Uganda” aptly articulate concepts that are a lasting contribution to scholarship on gender and military rule. Significantly, the book practices a generous model of scholarship evident in the several pages of acknowledgements at the start of her book and pays tribute to the people whose courage and memories constitute its central resource.

Concerning Violence: Nine Scenes from the Anti-Imperialistic Self-Defense

Luam Kidane

From Göran Hugo Olsson, the Swedish documentary filmmaker behind *The Black Power Mixtape*, comes *Concerning Violence: Nine Scenes from the Anti-Imperialistic Self-Defense*, a documentary made up of archives from various African decolonisation processes overlaid with excerpts from Frantz Fanon's final and seminal publication *The Wretched of the Earth*. The conclusion of the film begins with artist Lauryn Hill, the narrator of the film, reading from Fanon's work "Come, comrades, the European game is finally over, we must look for something else" begging the question; who is the audience that these words are addressed to? Fanon is calling for Africans to build models for liberation that reject European and colonial frameworks for they are simply successions of negations of our humanity. When asked about the audience of the film Olsson states "...[this] film [is] for my fellow west Europeans, northern west Europeans, American[s]...It is not a film directed at oppressed peoples it is directed to the westerns" (Timoner, 2014, minute 10:13). The archival footage is of Africans, of African liberation struggles, of African celebrations and of mourning, and the text, *The Wretched of the Earth*, is written by an African about African independence movements yet the intended audience of the collage of African thought and expression that is this film is not African. One can't help but feel an eerie voyeurism throughout the film not only knowing that we are not the intended audience, but also knowing and feeling who is often behind the camera.

The footage that this film was made up of is held by the Swedish Television Archives and as such Olsson has makes it clear that he feels an ownership of the footage and even goes on to say that Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* "...is our [the western white audience's] text. It is a common property" (Timoner, 2014, minute 17:31). In colonial systems of domination our bodies,

our thoughts, and our knowledge production are not ours. As such, Olsson's statements do not depart from the colonial trajectories that Africans have been resisting for centuries and that Fanon himself was calling us to reject. The only difference here is that this film, from having Lauryn Hill act as narrator to the contemporary aesthetic presentations of the footage, has managed to mask the scent of colonialism and in doing so, advance the notion that cultural production can be an apolitical site where the dynamics of white supremacy are inoculated by the good white intentions of those behind the film.

The first scene of the film, preceded by a preface read by Indian feminist Gayatri Spivak, *Decolonisation: With the MPLA in Angola 1974* begins with the voice of Gaetana Pagano, a reporter who was embedded with Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA), as they entered Cabinda, a city in the north of Angola. Pagano describes how the MPLA executed a successful offensive on a Portuguese army base. Following footage of the offensive, images of African caddies carrying the bags of white people playing golf fill the screen. The point being made by juxtaposing footage of Africans fighting for freedom with the humiliation of submission is to make vivid the preposterousness of colonial living. It is at this point that Lauryn Hill reads one of the most well known lines from *The Wretched of the Earth* “[t]he last shall be first and the first last”.

These images transitions us into scene two, which is titled *Indifference: Interviews with Tonderai Makoni Ph.D, Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, Conducted in Stockholm 1970*. Here Tonderai Makoni recounts his experiences of being jailed for five years and provides commentary that links the struggles of African people from Zimbabwe to South Africa to Britain and the United States of America. He asserts that in all of these places, though the particulars of the subjugation may be different, the common thread that connects the reasoning for why violence can be enacted on African peoples in each circumstance is because we are always positioned as subhuman. This reasoning then justifies Africans being treated as objects for domination.

As the Makoni interview fades “The U.D.I Song” by John Edmonds, a track that celebrates the likes of Cecil Rhodes and others who were a part of occupying Zimbabwe, introduces the third scene of the film, *Rhodesia*. Following the white supremacist overtones of the Edmonds track, a white colonialist male laments the increasing power that the African independence movements are gathering. He had taken for granted that he would have at

least had time to burn everything before the Africans living in Zimbabwe took their land back. However, he admits that he has miscalculated the speed of the liberation movements and muses that he might have to leave without having time to burn everything.

Depicting the complicated processes of colonisation the fourth scene, *A World Cut in Two*, shows Africans serving white populations who are lounging poolside while Hill speaks the words of Fanon that describe the state of despair that colonisation has left the African people in while also pointing to the envy that this has created within Africans. This envy, Fanon argues, will spur the colonised to overthrow the coloniser so that they may take those positions of power back.

A Swedish-American mining company named Lamco is the focus of the fifth scene, *LAMCO, Liberia 1966*. After a strike by workers demanding better working conditions at the Lamco site in Nimba, Liberia the Liberian government, under pressure from capital interests, sends in troops to support the arrest of some of the workers and the eviction of other workers from their homes as punishment for disrupting the flow of business. As the camera spans out the viewer sees a family dropped off outside the boundaries of Lamco by Liberian soldiers in the dead of night, left to figure out what is next with the belongings they managed to pack and their young children.

That Poverty of Spirit, the sixth scene of the film, introduces Fanon's critique of religion through an interview with two Swedish missionaries posted in Tanzania. The interview is awkward because of its unintended clarity. The missionaries are asked about their role in Tanzania and it quickly becomes clear that the message they are purporting to spread, ostensibly love for all people, is simply a guise for another angle of colonisation enacted through the performance of religion for their definition of a people does not include the African person. As the sixth scene continues, Fanon's words on the erasure of African land rights, the extractive processes that support capitalist colonial practises and how these conditions sets the ground for the growth of African resistance are read by Hill. This scene is particularly poignant because the African viewers will find themselves asking if there is indeed a difference between the white missionaries and the white filmmaker through which these stories are being weaved?

The seventh scene, *The Fiat G.91: With the FRELIMO in Mozambique 1972*, shows archival footage of FRELIMO in the field and interviews with

women freedom fighters alongside the bloodied devastation on the people of Mozambique by Portuguese colonialists. This is the scene that Spivak refers to in the preface to the film when she speaks of the image of the young African woman and her baby, both of whom have been severely injured by Portuguese attacks. Spivak refers to the woman as “Black Venus” because the images of her in this scene alluded to the Black Madonna and the Venus de Milo. The preface, to divert from the seventh scene for a moment, is of significance because Spivak brings important critiques of how gender is often overlooked by writers like Fanon and also marginalised by freedom movements once power has been taken. Though she brings necessary critiques, it is curious that Spivak is giving the preface and this critique rather than an African feminist. In a film with very few visible African women speaking, the impact of a non-African woman giving the preface is heavy. Nevertheless, even if an African woman had given the preface it would not have been able to overcome the deep flaws that make this film reiterate the white male gaze and open old woundings arising from the oppressions of African women and of African peoples more broadly. The very process of the film itself re-creates this white voyeurism in a manner that no preface could mitigate.

Now, to return to the seventh scene: The seventh scene is a prime example of the predatory tones of this film. The body of the African woman, who Spivak refers to as “Black Venus”, is depicted here, in continuation of colonial traditions, to service a public spectacle of shock. She is sitting on a table missing an arm while her baby, who is missing a leg, is feeding on her exposed breasts. She is visibly uncomfortable as the camera lingers on her and her injured child. Though there is other footage in the film that also plays on the trope of shock by depicting the effects of physical violence on the bodies of African men there is an element of vulnerability and consumption that is being invoked by the footage of this African woman that we cannot ignore. Sitting at the intersection of, among others, gender, race, dis/ability, sexuality, and class, the conditions of colonialism sees to it that the African woman is open to harm from all sides – not excluding her own people. As she and her baby sit in their pain the film crew lingers in their consumption of her and without hearing her and without any sense of reciprocity we, the audience, watch. Even in the work of exposing colonialism, the visual images exploit and misrepresent African women as the quintessential, silent, victims of carnage, invoking sentiments of pity and paternalism among white viewers.

The African woman is the mule of the world, whispers the ghost of Zora Neale Hurston. What were the processes of consent for the acquiring of the footage in this film and for its ongoing dissemination? Why is it necessary to show this footage and whose desires does it appeal to?

The filmmaker argues in various interviews that the footage for the film was chosen in order to make visible the suffering that colonialism causes (Timoner, 2014). Once again, the hundreds of thousands of testimonials from Africans, unfiltered by the white gaze, over the last century are apparently not enough to have done so. A Swedish, or western, perspective must be the one framing them in order for the testimonials to be palatable; the stories of Africans must be cited, or they are not valid, Olsson reminds us. Then, as if to create a pre-emptive response to the critique of the white gaze so central to the depiction of the African woman with her baby, the scene following it, *Defeat*, shows the death of Portuguese male soldiers. Mournful music accompanies the image: we are simultaneously invited to observe that we are not *only* being shown the carnage of Africans but also of the 'other' side while being, not so subtly, nudged that we should also feel a sympathetic response to these deaths. The faux disruption of the white gaze breaks here – the farce can only go on for so long before we return to regular programming. Concluding this scene is Amílcar Cabral emphasising the importance of African cultural programs and programmatic infrastructure as a part of the independence project. Scene nine, *Raw Materials*, puts into conversation Fanon's writings on the need to reclaim our means of production with Thomas Sankara's words on resisting neo-colonial practises through ensuring that our communities are self-sustainable.

Though there are many more aspects of this film worthy of critical analysis, the critique central to this film review moves beyond this one film, as it is only symptomatic of a much larger problem. Olsson argues that this film, and his earlier production, *The Black Power Mixtape* are not about Africans but rather are about the Swedish videographers who captured this footage (Timoner, 2014). The thin veil of this argument would not withstand a light summer breeze. Olsson, by his own admission, has relationships with these videographers yet their bodies are not the spectacle that these films hinge or depend on (Timoner, 2014). It is not that the Swedish videographers are invisible or even not present in the film. On the contrary, their omnipresence behind the camera is what continues to centre the power dynamics through

which white supremacy founds itself on. Even though the intended audience of the film is not African, if we do see the film not only are we watching archives not held by those whom the footage is of, we are also only being allowed to see the portions of our stories that non-Africans deem important. Our stories are being shaped by others yet again. Our memories are being filtered through, and by Europeans who continue to demonstrate the power they exercise over the representations of our bodies, our stories, and our knowledges.

Cultural production is political, a critical component of our freedom struggles. It is through sites of cultural production and the encounters that these sites stage that we imagine and begin building our self-determined decolonial futures. If non-Africans want to fight alongside us, the archives must be returned to the communities that they depict. This call does not end, nor begin, with Swedish filmmakers in this case, or with non-African cultural producers and archivists more generally, but rests primarily with us as Africans peoples. Simply having the footage returned to us for stewardship is not the only remedy for transformation. Our own archival practises, modes of cultural production, and knowledge production, do not exist outside the problematic power relationships within our communities. Holding the flawed archives of our past is not enough to change historical narratives, as decolonising the archive requires that we establish processes of accountability and consent that we actively and continually weave into the fabrics of our struggles and visions for freedom. An important conversation needs to be re-opened about memory, culture and cultural production in the service of pan-Africanism.

All oppressed peoples must be able to maintain control over their own stories. Archiving is done to retain memory, experiences and knowledges. Archiving acts as sites for knowledge transmission within communities and sometimes for knowledge circulation between communities. In terms of radical pan-African feminist archiving we have to interrogate the practises, usages and habits of archiving as circulation and transmission. When doing archiving work with people and communities it is integral that there are clear consent and accountability processes established between those doing the archiving and those whose experiences, knowledges, art works and so forth is being archived – even if one is of and from the community. Some initial questions that those of us interested in cultural production in service of a radical pan-Africanism must consider are: What are the purposes of the archival project

and how do they serve the persons and communities involved? What are processes for dispute resolution and accountability between those archiving and the persons or communities participating in the archival project? How are decisions about where the archives will be held made? How are the frameworks for decision making around the archival project addressing the existing power dynamics within communities that privilege the voice of some at the expense of others? How will the archival processes ensure that those whose stories are being told will retain control? Any answer to these questions would need to include formulating community accountability measures in which consent is non-negotiable and an essential component to any collaborative work that is done. It would also mean a cooperative approach to resource sharing and distribution. Though these guiding questions are important they also cannot be understood in abstraction from our broader struggles for self-determination. Let's switch the script comrades, the European game is finally over, we must look for something else.

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The Art of Ama Ata Aidoo. Documentary film
(78 minutes). Directed by Yaba Badoe, Fadoa Films

Helen Yitah

The Art of Ama Ata Aidoo, a film directed by award-winning independent film maker, Yaba Badoe, is the latest addition to recent efforts to celebrate the renowned literary foremother. The film comes on the heels of the anthology, *Essays in Honour of Ama Ata Aidoo at 70: A Reader in African Cultural Studies*, edited by Anne V. Adams (2012); the colloquium on Ama Ata Aidoo organised by the University of California, Santa Barbara in the same year; an honorary doctorate conferred on her by the University of Ghana in 2013; and a collection of her new and collected poems, *After the Ceremonies*, which I compiled, arranged and edited, and which was due to be published by the African Poetry Book Fund.

Funded through crowd sourcing and produced by Fadoa Films, *The Art of Ama Ata Aidoo* was put together by filming Aidoo's activities over a one year period during which she paid several visits to her hometown, Aboadzi Kyiakor, in the Central Region of Ghana. Also included is footage of the launch, in Accra, of her most recent collection of short stories, *Diplomatic Pounds* (2012), and the recent performance of her play, *Anowa*, by the Theatre Department of the University of California, Santa Barbara.

As with the events preceding it, *The Art of Ama Ata Aidoo* bears testimony to Aidoo's stature – her glaring celebrity as a writer who, as Jane Bryce affirms in the film's prelude, “functions as a front-runner, a forerunner, a person who can put on the table a series of issues which contemporary women can deal with, and continue to deal with.” Like Aidoo herself, the film is understatedly philosophical and bubbles over with new ideas and impressions about the writer and her oeuvre. Yet in its deft synthesis of concept, enactment and observation, the film achieves much more in less than ninety minutes than the earlier honors accorded Aidoo, taking us back

us to Aidoo's beginnings and charting her life as an African woman and as a writer.

The beginning of Aidoo's writerly career, we learn, lies in a number of influences that galvanised her into creativity: from storytelling by her mother and by semi-professional tellers, to the art of itinerant preachers, to her school days at Wesley Girls' Secondary School where, as a third year student, she was asked by a teacher what she wanted to do for a career, to which she responded that she wanted to be a poet. Although the teacher remarked that "poetry doesn't feed anybody", she gave Aidoo an Olivetti typewriter—a symbolic present that adumbrated Aidoo's creative calling.

The film's portrayal of Aidoo's native town and its culture shows the strength of its people to battle the exigencies of daily existence, as well as their good cheer as they go about their daily activities, and the palpable creative energies that accompany their undertakings. In the absence of the "stories, happenings, stuff..." that impinged upon the young Aidoo, the Akokwa Mpanyinsem Kodzifo storytellers demonstrate the wealth of oral tradition that continues to provide Aidoo with inspiration and source material for her works, as well as the network of connections between her and her people.

Another of Aidoo's experiences that stands out in the rich milieu of literary activities presented in the film is her confession that her career was launched by an advertisement about a short story competition in one of Ghana's national newspapers. Determined to acquire a pair of shoes that she had seen in a shop, Aidoo tells that she submitted an entry to the competition, her very first story prophetically titled "Unto Us a Child Is Born". She was surprised to win the prize! From this initial act of sheer bravado, Aidoo has not looked back. Indeed, as the title of one of her poems in *An Angry Letter in January* (1992) boldly declares, "a woman's voice does not break, it gets firmer". In another fortuitous occurrence, in response to a request by the Africanist writer and scholar, Ulli Beier, Aidoo wrote "In the Cutting of a Drink", a classic story later published in her collection, *No Sweetness Here* (1970).

Of great interest and an overriding concept in the film is the liberated (and liberating) "space" in which Aidoo flourished as an artist. Aidoo acknowledges this space as well as her family and her royal lineage: "This whole area is literally my place in the sense that this is the section of Ghana that I can with confidence claim is *my* place". The space to which she refers is manifested

as much in the slave castles that line Ghana's coast, as it is in her father's imposing mansion, which Aidoo admits looked bigger when she was a young girl. It is also evident in the vast coastal landscape, made more impressive by the progressively widening full shot that opens the film.

With each sweep of a wide angle lens, viewers of *The Art of Ama Ata Aidoo* are ushered further and deeper into the author's imaginary worlds, from the rural and national in *No Sweetness Here* (1970) to the urban and global in *Diplomatic Pounds* (2012). And although Aidoo insists in a recent interview with Maureen Eke, Vincent Odamtten and Stephanie Newell (2013) that her stories "reflect not so much my intentions as the period in which they were produced" (163), it is clear that as a writer she has always been far ahead of her time.

One of the great temptations one faces in writing about this film is the urge to emphasise its music and spectacle and its general celebratory atmosphere, of which there is more than enough to arrest one's curiosity. Yet in many ways these aspects reiterate important themes in Aidoo's oeuvre. For example, the first few scenes of the film are accompanied with non-diegetic choral music from the song, "San Befɔ", by renowned Ghanaian musician, Ephraim Amu. Its lyrics tell of a young man, ɔkofo Kwasi Barima who, in his hurried quest for material things, neglects what is most essential— his culture, values, and very identity—for which the singer urges him to return. This song segues harmoniously into the first of several texts that Aidoo performs in the film: the final part of her poem, "Speaking of Hurricanes". Taken from her collection, *An Angry Letter in January* (1992), the poem was written "for Micere Mugo and all other African exiles". "Ow My Sister", it begins:

let me lament
 my openly beautiful land and her people
 who hide good things and bad so well,
 only decay and shame become
 public,
 international.

As with Amu's song, this poem laments the political and economic upheavals that have been created on the African continent in the name of progress and development. Lawrence Boadi (2005) views the name ɔkofo Kwasi Barima as an "alien combination [that] symbolically recalls the manner in which... this nonentity pursues his search", leaving behind what is essential. Similarly,

Aidoo's poem takes on the alien forces that have blown away Africans' hopes for big and beautiful things—most notably the slave trade. Yet in “Speaking of Hurricanes”, Aidoo is not sparing in her criticism of “my people”, especially the tyrants and despots who have left in their wake a brain drain and “women in various forms of civilised bondage”. Hence her reference in the poem to “decay and shame”. These are the kinds of issues that Aidoo thinks “might be controversial, might make people uncomfortable”.

Overall, the success of the documentary comes from its balanced blend of multiple genres: biographical vignettes by Aidoo herself and by literary stalwarts such as Anne Adams, Nana Wilson-Tagoe and Jane Bryce who have worked on Aidoo's writings; live performances and re-enactments of Aidoo's work; interviews; readings, and so on. Aidoo's self-portraits (though understated in large part), together with the commentary, testify to her stature as a pioneer writer who, through her celebration of the complexity of African femininity, has stood out from the crowd of mainly male African authors. Through the film, those unfamiliar with Aidoo and her works will gain an insight into the span of her experience and cultural reach, as well as the different genres that she has so deftly mastered, including the play, the novel, the poem and the short story. As Wilson-Tagoe tells us of Aidoo: “She can write a short story of three pages and give you an entire world”.

Its broad scope, depth and complexity attest that *The Art of Ama Ata Aidoo* is not one thing serving one purpose, but multiple things serving multiple purposes for multiple groups of people. It is, and is likely to remain, a timeless piece of work, an immemorial presence. With her modest smile, Aidoo herself quips so often in and of the film: “Isn't that something?”

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Legacies and Losses: A Review of Claim No Easy Victories: The Legacy of Amílcar Cabral.

By Fizone Manji and Bill Fletcher Jr. (eds.), 2013, CODESRIA and Daraja Press. 2013.

Claudia Gastrow

This collection of essays explores the multifaceted nature of the Amílcar Cabral's legacy with the specific goal of understanding his relevance to contemporary politics. Ranging from his philosophical arguments about culture and colonialism to more concrete historical explorations of his impact on African American movements in the United States, the book is an accessible and valuable introduction to Cabral's thought. Although the dedication of more space to questions of gender and his relevance to Africa in particular would have been welcome, the book provides a rich exploration of pan-Africanism, internationalism, community organising, education, theories of revolution and Africana philosophy.

How does one elucidate a legacy? This is at base the question posed by the collection of thirty-eight essays that constitute this timely book about the life and work of Amílcar Cabral. As the independence leader of Guinea Bissau and Cabo Verde (until his assassination on 20 January 1973) Cabral sits alongside Frantz Fanon, Walter Rodney, Steve Biko, Thomas Sankara and Kwame Nkrumah as one of those rare figures that represents the meeting of revolutionary practice and deep philosophical thought. He interrogated topics ranging from revolution, nationalism, the politics of culture and history, pan-Africanism, the colonial and post-colonial state, and the question of class in colonial societies. His writing was prolific and his actions great. Nevertheless, as many of the contributors point out, his name seems to have slipped from the tongues of academics, activists, and politicians. It is precisely this historical elision that these articles seek to counter.

The collection opens with a preface by Mireille Fanon-Mendès France who insightfully lays out the social, political and philosophical conditions that make the collection an urgent contribution. The dream of flourishing

democracies that would be driven by the experiences and the needs of those most oppressed during the colonial period has failed to materialise. Instead, a series of abusive leaders and the growing power of neoliberal agendas have caused the disintegration of early aspirations for liberation. But what constitutes liberation in the contemporary moment? What resources can people today, in Africa and around the world, draw on to imagine and enact their desires? Writing that Cabral foresaw the “deceptive dawn of African independence”, Fanon-Mendès France argues that Cabral’s project of “building a new humanity” is therefore especially relevant to today’s need to remake political life and institutions.

Echoing Fanon-Mendès France’s belief in the contemporary relevance of Cabral’s political philosophy, Manji and Fletcher, in their introduction to the book, state that the collection seeks to understand Cabral in “four-dimensional view”, with the fourth dimension being “time” or “context”. This statement is one of the central pillars of the book as essays tend to either contextualise Cabral’s own historic moment, explore his argument that revolutionary thought and practice must be based in the historical conditions in which people find themselves, or have a comparative aspect either across discipline, region, or time in an effort to extend Cabral’s significance beyond his context. The book thereby ushers Cabral out of his moment and into our present, where his words are so vital for rethinking revolution and the conditions for emancipation. It provides insight about his influence in such diverse realms as US Black activism, Africana philosophy, education policy, and Marxist thought. The result is a rich introduction to Cabral’s writings, especially useful for those previously unfamiliar with his work.

To guide the reader, the book has been thematically divided into seven sections, namely “Introduction”, “Legacy”, “Reflections”, “Women and Emancipation”, “Pan-Africanism”, “Culture and Education”, and “Cabral and the African American Struggle”. In “Legacy” the reader is given a basic introduction to the historical context in which Cabral was writing. Essays by Nigel Gibson, Mustafah Dhada, Reiland Rabaka, Richard A. Lobban Jr, Ameth Lo, and Samir Amin, provide insight into Cabral’s biography, the context of anti-colonial struggles, and the central tenants of his thought such as his “weapons of theory” argument, the nuances of his call to “return to the source”, the question of “class suicide”, commitments to and criticisms of pan-Africanism, and his analysis of Marxism. Of special note is Carlos

Schwarz's detailed account of Cabral's work as an agronomist. Through this he delicately shows how Cabral's agronomy experiences provided the basis of his political thought and praxis in Guinea Bissau. The paper "Sons of the Soil" interestingly locates Cabral's thought within a comparative framework with Portugal by juxtaposing Cabral's ideas and actions with the writings of José Saramago. In doing this, it reveals how Cabral has seeped into Portuguese critiques of their own material and political conditions. The understanding of the anger of Portuguese peasants is framed in relation to the actions of anti-colonial fighters in Guinea Bissau. The categories through which Portuguese revolutionary practice are comprehended, therefore emanate from the former colonies. Excellent pieces for understanding Cabral's links to other African thinkers include Helmi Sharawy's exploration of African-Arab relations and Aziz Salamone Fall's essay which tragically investigates the crushing of revolutionary potential across Africa.

The second section, "Reflections", dwells further on the topics introduced in the previous section. Essays by Lewis R. Gordon and Jacques Depelchin draw on Cabral's writings to address questions of epistemology, the difficulty of defining political conditions, and the significance of rethinking contemporary capitalism in relation to the remaking of the human. Wangui Kimari, William Minter, Maria Problet, Adrian Harewood, Filament Lopes and Demba Moussa Dembélé investigate the details of political organising, significance of "returning to the source" for the African diaspora, and trace the internationalist dimensions of how Cabral's work has been taken up. In a very moving interview, Augusta Henriques and Miguel Barros explore the intergenerational experiences, senses of loss, and political concerns of Guinea Bissauans. The two speakers work through their disappointments with Guinea's Bissau's independence and try to grapple with what the future holds, especially in relation to the dreams which Cabral's words proffered an earlier generation.

The final four sections address specific topics in relation to Cabral's thought. The section on "Women and Emancipation" while excellent, is surprisingly short at just two articles. The first, by Stephanie Urdang, is a personal account of the experiences (and eventual failure) of actions taken towards women's emancipation during the anti-colonial struggle in Guinea Bissau. The second, by Patrícia Godinho Gomes, is an account of the history of movements and policies aimed at improving the position of women in

post-independence Guinea Bissau. Both of these essays are rich resources for readers seeking an introduction to the question of gender in Guinea Bissau. However, given that Cabral was one of the few male anti-colonial thinkers in his questioning of the “gender-blind” and patriarchal nationalism that many African countries embraced, one would have expected that more space be dedicated to the question of gender within the collection.

Section five on pan-Africanism situates Cabral’s thought within a nexus of anti-colonial Black political theorists. Essays by Patricia Rodney et al, David Austin, Amrit Wilson, Perry Mars, and Explo Nani-Kofi therefore include comparisons of his and Walter Rodney’s thought, and links between his thought and Caribbean thinkers such as Fanon and CLR James. This section attentively grapples with the difficulties of building pan-Africanist solidarities across historically varied experiences of oppression, the problematics of Caribbean imaginations of Africa, and the difficulties of building pan-Africanism in a post-colonial era focused on nation-states. The section on Education includes an original reflection on the question of difference in Cabral’s writings by Olúfemi Táíwo. He draws on Cabral’s warnings against portraying reified tradition as a source of authenticity, to argue against the turn to essentialised practices and beliefs as representative of “some unique one-of-a-kind African culture” (278). He instead calls for a politics steeped in a recognition of change and history in Africa. Contributions also include essays by Brandon Lundy and N. Barney Pityana that investigate the importance of context and culture in designing educational practices, and an exploration by Miguel de Barros and Redy Wilson Lima of the remaking of Cabral’s words in contemporary Guinean and Capeverdean rap music as a form of memory-making and political subversion

The last section of the collection investigates the significance of Cabral’s works to African Americans. Papers by Bill Fletcher Jr, Kali Akuno, Ajamu Baraka, Makungu M. Akinyele, and Walter Turner focus on Cabral’s contribution to promoting internationalism within African American politics, reveal how his work created a space for the Black left to embrace a Marxist critique of US racism, and investigate his impact on specific African American movements such as the Black Panthers and the House of Umoja. The collection closes with a short piece by Angela Davis who draws on Cabral’s writings to ask the readers to think of a struggle that moves beyond militarism and violence, to a substantial remaking of consciousness – the need to build

of a new humanity as Fanon-Mendès France had reminded the reader at the outset of the collection.

While the collection is extremely comprehensive, strangely enough, very little of it explicitly focuses on Cabral's significance for Africa. While there are discussions of his historical connections to activists and thinkers in Angola, Mozambique, Guinea, and Zanzibar among others, the attempt to think through his legacy appears to focus more on the Caribbean and the US than contemporary Africa, where arguably his ideas are more needed than ever. From xenophobic violence in South Africa to the African Union's turning of a blind eye to repression in Ethiopia, Angola, Eritrea, Swaziland and Zimbabwe, and increasing restrictions on movements of Africans both inside and outside the African continent, topics such as African migration, political democracy in Africa, and the ongoing legacies of settler colonialism would have been fertile areas for this collection to explore. Their absence is a notable lacuna in an otherwise valuable and interesting contribution.

Nonetheless, the collection overall provides an excellent introduction to Cabral's thought. Some readers might find frustrating that the essays are decidedly mixed in terms of their presumed audiences – while some are deeply philosophical, others are far more practical, focusing on the everyday work of organising. Readers should centre their attention on what in the book they are seeking out as it is unlikely that all essays will be equally appealing to their interests. The book should not therefore be approached as simply an academic reflection about Cabral's writings, but rather a real attempt to explore, as indicated at the beginning of the review, the multifaceted nature of Cabral's contemporary legacy. As a collection it is a timely one and will be valuable for anyone seeking to be introduced or reacquainted with debates about revolution, colonialism and culture, nationalism, and pan-Africanism.

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The Weaving Kenya Women's Collective ("The Weavers") is a feminist collective formed in 2012 as a staging ground for women's collaborative and cooperative creativity. In a cyber-space anchored in Nairobi in 2014, a group from amongst "The Weavers" convened the virtual round-table that was the genesis for this essay, in order to revisit ideas of belonging and identity, and to see what happens if - and when - we take women's lives, experiences, and memories seriously as a mode of being-in-the world.

Participants: Akitelek Mboya, Aleya Kassam, Dayo Foster, Garnette Olouch-Olunya, Kerubo Abuya, Marziya Mohammedali, Mshai Mwangola, Ngwatilo Mawiyoo, Wambui Mwangi, Wangui wa Goro and Wanjiru Kamau-Rutenberg.

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A publication of the
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University of Cape Town

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