



Editorial Notes

Things a-stirring with the Harmattan....

Blair Rutherford

Born to a throne, stronger than Rome
But violent prone, poor people zone
But it's my home, all I have known
Where I got grown, streets we would roam
But out of the darkness, I came the farthest
Among the hardest survival
Learn from these streets, it can be bleak
Accept no defeat, surrender retreat

So we struggling, fighting to eat and
We wondering when we'll be free
So we patiently wait, for that fateful day
It's not far away, so for now we say

When I get older, I will be stronger
They'll call me freedom, just like a waving flag
And then it goes back, and then it goes back
And then it goes back.

— K'naan, "Waving Flag," *Troubadour* (2009)

There is something fresh, again, about Africa. The conferences, the books, the tweets, the blogs, the debates, the investments, the struggles, the films, the sports, the gospels and sermons from many religious doctrines and syncreticisms, the conflicts, and the music — perhaps, especially the music — have been generating greater interest, wider scopes, and more intense activities concerning African matters within and beyond the continent of Africa. There are new scrambles for influence and access afoot, involving not only the usual 20th-century colonial and other Global North players, but also greater activities and interests by China, Brazil, India, Turkey, and Arab League players in different spots and enclaves in Africa. Hopes are being generated, or more accurately, regenerated, rejuvenated, and retooled even amid continued, enduring, even deepening poverty, inequalities, environmental crises, misgovernance, and other forms of abjection that have too long afflicted generations in many localities on the continent.

The words of “Waving Flag” — a song written by Somalia-born and raised, Toronto-based, Keynaan Cabdi Warsame, a.k.a. K’naan, also nephew of the legendary Somali singer Magool — were rewritten by its author as part of a Coca-Cola Inc. advertising campaign to celebrate the Fifa World Cup™ in South Africa, to be more “hopeful,” a sign of greater attempts to have a renewed imagination of (and more business practices in) Africa. Meanwhile, Achilles Mbembe, the renowned Cameroonian, South Africa-based cosmopolitan critic of the postcolonial crises in Africa, has suggested in his new book *Sortir de la grande nuit: Essai sur l’Afrique décolonisée* that Africa must reconstitute its own force, rediscover the resources for its own regeneration, and go beyond its entangled history with Europe. Through such efforts, Africa will advan-

tageously negotiate with itself and with the world, enabling a condition to create something eminently new.¹

Nokoko is another vehicle for listening in, stirring up, and moving with the older and the newer winds a-blowing through and beyond Africa. *Nokoko* is an open-access journal that promotes dialogue, discourse, and debate on pan-Africanism, Africa, and Africana. It builds on the foundational work of Professor Daniel Osabu-Kle of Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada, and his colleagues when they started the *Journal of Pan-African Wisdom* in 2005. *Nokoko* is a Ga word that means something that is new, novel, surprising, and interesting. The journal offers a venue for scholarship to challenge enduring simplified views of Africa and the African diaspora, by providing other perspectives and insights that may be surprising, interesting, and even refreshing.

The journal is hosted by the new Institute of African Studies at Carleton University. The Institute was established in 2009, as part of the expanding interest in things African in Canada and elsewhere. Many of the editorial board members have ties to the Institute, and we see *Nokoko* as a way to expand the conversations, discussions, and counterpoints that are going on here and in many other places about Africa's future, present, and past. For ideas of Africa are more contested, more exciting, and arguably more perilous than ever before. As the title of a manuscript by Pius Adesanmi, who is also on the *Nokoko* editorial board and who recently won the inaugural Penguin prize for African writing in the non-fiction category in September 2010, puts it, *You're Not*

1 Loosely translated from an interview Mbembe did with Norbert N. Ouendji in Johannesburg on 7 October 2010, found at <http://www.mediasfreres.org/>:

C'est en elle-même que l'Afrique doit redécouvrir les ressources de sa régénération, son centre, sa ligne médiane. Ceci n'est pas l'équivalent d'un retour à je ne sais quelles coutumes anciennes. L'Afrique doit se reconstituer en tant que force propre. C'est en devenant sa force propre qu'elle négociera avantageusement avec elle-même et avec le monde—condition pour créer quelque chose d'éminemment neuf, qui fasse signe à l'humanité dans son ensemble.

a Country, Africa. The title riffs off lines from a poem by the Sierra Leonean nationalist, Davidson Abioseh Nicol:

You are not a country, Africa
You are a concept
Fashioned in our minds, each to each,
To hide our separate fears
To dream our separate dreams

Combining spaces for academic and community reflection, *Nokoko* creates an opportunity for discussion of research that reflects on the complicated nature of pan-African issues. It provides a forum for the publication of work from a cross-disciplinary perspective that reflects scholarly endeavours, policy discussions, practitioners' reflections, and social activists' thinking concerning the continent and beyond. It provides oxygen to emerging and established scholars who wish to publish their work on Africa and its diasporas.

This issue is entitled *Politics Across Boundaries: Examples from Africa and the African Diaspora*. Its articles explore boundaries in their multiplicity of meanings, including political, cultural, and disciplinary, from a broad range of disciplines across the humanities and social sciences. *Boundaries* refers to political, economic, social, and cultural divides through which mobilization occurs or falters, administrative practices are entrenched or undermined, and power constitutes, refines, and amends.

From calls for the establishment of the "United States of Africa" and the dissolution of political boundaries to the hardened violent stakes involved in border conflicts, from the politics of ethnic disputes and consolidation to the varied discursive and institutional boundaries through which democratization is envisioned and practiced, from the boundaries forged and dissolved through African diasporic politics to the growing weight placed on the multinational boundaries of regional organizations, from the uneven political global geographies affecting climate change and

its treaties to the borders enforced through citizenship regimes against displaced peoples and African refugees in Africa and elsewhere, boundaries are of great importance in Africa and the African diaspora.

We are delighted to start the first issue with a penetrating and astute article entitled "What is Africa doing with the Novel?" by Professor Edward Sackey from the University of Ghana. Professor Sackey was the African Visiting Scholar to Carleton University in 2009–2010, and through his public talks and participation in seminars and private conversations with colleagues, students, and a variety of publics in the Ottawa-Gatineau region, he put forth his keen eye and fine words to explore the canonical boundaries around Africa and African literature in particular.

In "A Habitus of War and Displacement?: Bourdieu's 'Third Way' and Youth in Northern Uganda after Two Decades of War," Lara Rosenoff considers how many youth around the world are growing up in situations of prolonged warfare, so that most conceptual categories previously employed to understand youth in war are no longer useful in elucidating their experiences and choices. She seeks to move towards remedying this dilemma by exploring Pierre Bourdieu's classic "third way" approach to knowledge. She applies his theory of practice to youth in long-term conflict areas. Rosenoff is a PhD student in anthropology at the University of British Columbia. She has collaborated on numerous projects in and about Northern Uganda as artist, activist, and lecturer since 2004.

Elizabeth Cobbet, a doctoral student in political science at Carleton University, explores central discourses on banking in South Africa in her article "The South African Reserve Bank and the Telling of Monetary Stories." She argues that South African political economic leaders are in a struggle to put in place a master narrative about the economy. The South African Reserve Bank has put forward a dominant narrative about the need to reinteg-

rate the economy into a rapidly changing global financial environment after the long period of apartheid isolation. The last decades have seen constant efforts to bring the national economy in line with global financial requirements. Cobbet argues that these actors are engaged in an ongoing public debate, which plays out in the discourses about central banking.

Jessica Evans, a second-year master's student in Political Science at Carleton University, whose interests include critical international political economy, development, Southern Africa, Latin America, immigration, and regionalism. She explores the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in "The Neoliberal Turn in the SADC: Regional Integration and Disintegration." She argues that the SADC, formed in 1992 following the demise of its predecessor, the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), had been seized upon by Southern African regional political elites as a pivotal component in regional development, peace, and poverty reduction strategies. Yet to date, she argues, the SADC's track record has failed to demonstrate significant and meaningful advances in these domains. She explains that in the transformation of the SADCC to the SADC, the content and goals of regionalism shifted.

Wangui Kimari, a master's student in anthropology at Carleton University, and Jacob Rasmussen, a PhD student in politics, culture and global change in the Department of Society and Globalisation at Roskilde University, explore the People's Parliament in Nairobi in their article "Setting the Agenda for Our Leaders from under a Tree': The People's Parliament in Nairobi." They investigate how members of a social movement called the People's Parliament ("Bunge la Mwananchi" in KiSwahili) engage themselves in the everyday politics of Kenya's capital Nairobi. Drawing on notions of how to be political, they explore how oppositional politics and politics of resistance play out on a grass-roots level in contemporary Kenya. The exploration of political

practice relates to a discussion of the People's Parliament's position in the wider Kenyan society, and this dialectic is supported by comments on hegemonic and counterhegemonic processes. All of these elements relate to a broader discussion of boundaries and politics, and how to transgress and circumvent the economic, social, and conceptual boundaries that inform the way politics is understood and practiced.

Finally, Gacheke Gachihi, a community organizer with the Bunge la Mwananchi social movement in Kenya, writes about the idea of Pan-Africanism in his article "Pan-Africanism: Seeds for African Unity."

In the end, or perhaps in this beginning, *Nokoko* strives to document Africa's past and present in an engaged manner. It hopes to convey the contemporary manifestations of the continent's history in the myriad of locations in which its peoples have been established. Above all, the journal is dedicated to making the links between the everyday practices, struggles, and dreams of Africans and others in Africa and beyond, with the work of practitioners in policy, projects, and activism, academia.

Nokoko encourages work with a contemporary, engaged, and decolonial perspective that aims to cross the boundaries between the academy and practitioners, while simultaneously remaining open to other perspectives. *Nokoko* maintains a critical tilt, favouring engaged scholarship, while remaining open to broader perspectives. *Nokoko* is a forum for current scholarship, while recognizing wisdom is not confined to scholars.