Nokoko

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Nokoko is an open-access journal promoting dialogue, discourse and debate on Pan-Africanism, Africa, and Africana. *Nokoko* brings forward the foundational work of Professor Daniel Osabu-Kle 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 refreshing.

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 endeavour, policy discussions, practitioners' reflections, and social activists' thinking concerning the continent and beyond. Hosted by the Institute of African Studies, at Carleton University (in Ottawa, Canada), *Nokoko* provides a space for emerging and established scholars to publish their work on Africa and the African diaspora.

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Contributors

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Elizabeth Cobbett is a PhD student in Political Science at Carleton University.

Jessica Evans is a first year Master's student in Political Science at Carleton University. Her interests include critical international political economy, development, Southern Africa, Latin America, immigration and regionalism.

Wangui Kimari is a Master's student in Anthropology at Carleton University. Her research is on the African diaspora in Brazil, focusing on migration, education and identity.

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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*

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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 envi-
ronment after the long period of apartheid isolation. The last de-
cades 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 Sci-
ence at Carleton University, whose interests include critical inter-
national political economy, development, Southern Africa, Latin
America, immigration, and regionalism. She explores the South-
ern 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 devel-
opment, peace, and poverty reduction strategies. Yet to date, she
argues, the SADC's track record has failed to demonstrate signifi-
cant 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 Carle-
ton University, and Jacob Rasmussen, a PhD student in politics,
culture and global change in the Department of Society and Glob-
alisation 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 Peo-
ple'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 op-
positional 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-Africansim 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.

What is Africa doing with the Novel?

Edward Sackey

> The storyteller takes what he tells from experience—his own or that reported by others. And he in turn makes it the experience of those who are listening to his tale. The novelist has isolated himself. The birthplace of the novel is the solitary individual, who is no longer able to express himself by giving examples of his most important concerns, is himself uncounseled, and cannot counsel others. To write a novel means to carry the incommensurable to extremes in the representation of human life.

— Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (2007)

The burden of this paper is to attempt to answer the question: what is Africa doing with the novel? But I must admit that as deceptively simple as this question looks and sounds, it is a complex one; and its answer is manifold. Africa is doing so many things with the novel. In his book *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Edward Said has deeply explored the role of the novel in the colonial and imperial enterprise of Western colonialism. He argues eloquently that "stories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world, they also become the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history" (p. xii). In fact, the history of Chinua

Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), a corrective novel of prime importance and an embodiment of that history is relevant here. Conceived as a response to the denigration of Africa in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) and Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson* (1939), Things Fall Apart seeks to correct the negative colonialist constructed image of Africa. A reading of *The Africa That Never Was: Four Centuries of British Writing about Africa* (1970) reveals a summa of the damage that narratives, travelogues, and novels have done to the image of Africa. This is not to say that narratives are not good; they can be useful. Narratives or storytelling serve as conduits for the transmission of knowledge and culture in Africa. There is also the phenomenon popularly known as "the Empire Writes Back"—thanks to Salman Rushdie. It is a form of re-writing colonial texts, questioning the colonialist assumptions underpinning them; beside that, it offers decolonized writers the opportunity to bring new interpretations to bear on colonialist narratives. These re-written colonial texts reflect reactions—which have been described controversially, I think, as "postcolonial"—to colonialist actions.

The argument

But my interest in this paper is predominantly in the formal aspect of the novel: the various literary devices which African experimental novelists deploy in these novels in their attempt to domesticate it. What has prompted this question, which is the subject of this paper, is the unmitigated compulsion on the part of the Western critical establishment and some Western-educated African critics to assert that the novel is alien to African forms of expression and that it is a Western import. My position is that whether the West is the absolute origin of the novel form or not, Africans have been writing novels that easily stand in comparison with the best novels anywhere in the world. What, then, should

preoccupy critics and scholars of the novel, in my view, is to subject the modern African novels available to us now to an honest textual probing to find out whether the modern African novel extends the frontiers of the novel form as a whole or not. Therefore, to my mind, the productive question to ask in comparison with the compulsion to prove the origin of the novel and how it eventually ended up in Africa is: What is Africa doing with the Novel? As Kwame Appiah argues, "African novels do not need justification; they need as do all novels, analysis, understanding—in short, reading" without prejudice (in Gates, 1984, p. 146). Armah also makes that point in "The Lazy School of Literary Criticism" (25 February 1985) in a forceful manner. And that is precisely what I have been doing with selected works of Peter Abrahams, Chinua Achebe, Ama Ata Aidoo, Ayi Kwei Armah, Kofi Awoonor, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Kojo Laing, Ousmane Sembene, Wole Soyinka, and Amos Tutuola. But for reasons of space, I shall limit this paper to Armah, who is the epicentre of my study of the African novel. I have chosen Armah as the epicentre of my project not because he is the point of origin of the modern African novel, or African literature for that matter, but because I consider him as one African writer who is deeply involved in what one can describe as total (African) literature. Armah is an accomplished novelist, poet, and critic who has singlehandedly engineered the establishment of a co-operative publishing concern, now responsible for publishing and marketing his books. Per Ankh, the co-operative publishing establishment, like Armah himself, is based in Senegal, Africa. Armah's whole personality, that of a model of the African people—inseparable from Armah as artist and thinker—is constantly growing in stature as a great educator, a mentor, an awakener and a liberator, of Africans. If Armah is an African novelist, it is not just because he writes about Africa, but because he writes about it in an African kind of way; the way in which *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973, 2000) is a novel of Africa ra-

ther than simply about Africa. I think it is no exaggeration to say that Armah writes Africa itself and not *about* Africa. Further, and more importantly, just as Africans exist in the interstices of each others' lives, so does Armah live in the interstices of African culture and experience.

Methodology

The paper offers a close textual spadework of Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons*, exploring his creative and critical appreciation of African elements and the ways that appropriation functions to bring into being a novel form that can be described as demonstrably African; a novel genre that arises from African historical and cultural matrix, and it is understood in terms of that origin. Scrupulous examination of the challenges and techniques of Armah as an African experimentalist novelist and explication and analysis of this novel will replace the platitudes and clichés of critical pronouncements which have hitherto dominated discussions of the modern African novel. The study will deal comprehensively with what Armah has made of the novel, how he has reinvented it to "bear the burden" of African culture and worldview. I shall treat Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons* in this paper as a representative African novel. Armah's writing is layered so that to understand *Two Thousand Seasons* one needs to go back to his works before it. His works are linked and organically connected. Content and form are inseparable in his novels, but they are more so in *Two Thousand Seasons*. Subsequently, a discussion of form implies a discussion of content vice versa. However, in this paper, my concern is more with form and the grammar of the African novel than content.

Critics might ask—and legitimately so—what difference my study is bringing to the existing critical literature on the African novel? What is my contribution to the study of the African novel? I

am aware of works by critics and scholars, Africans and non-Africans, on the African novel, as my bibliography shows. What is missing in the existing critical literature is the directional under-pinning of the African novel. There has been no focus on the discovery of the philosophical foundations of the immanent experimentation in the African novel. Hitherto, we have been more concerned with the collection of words that we articulate and read in the African novels, to the neglect of the abstract and underlying deep structures which regulate their meanings. Therefore, my opinion is that it is this grammar of the African novel that must be our critical preoccupation. This is my major assignment in this paper- what are the philosophical and social arrangements that inform the on-going experimentations in the African novel, if any?

In his third novel, *Why Are We So Blest?* (1972), Armah has made a critical and revolutionary declaration and statement of principle in the name of Solo Ankonam—an artist who is in constant search of the appropriate and effective artistic medium not so much to reach the ordinary African people, but, more importantly, to create what Bertolt Brecht describes as an "alienation effect" in his African readership. To this effect, Armah writes:

> Why not simply accept the fate of an artist, and like a Western seer, closemy eyes to everything around, find relief in discrete beauty, and make its elaboration my vocation? Impossible. The Western artist is blest with that atrophy of vision that can see beauty in deliberately broken-off pieces of a world sickened with oppression's ugliness. I hear the call of that art too. But in the world of my people that most important first act of creation, that rearrangement without which all attempts at creation are doomed to falseness, remains to be done. Europe hurled itself against us—not for creation, but to destroy us, to use us for creating itself. America, a growth out of Europe, now deepens that destruction. In this wreckage there is no creative art outside the destruction of the destroyers. In my people's world, revolution would be the only art, revolutionaries the only creators. All else is part of Africa's destruction (Armah, 1972, p. 231).

This declaration has radically changed the direction of Armah's writing and social activism; it is not mere rhetoric. He breaks with

the western elitist concept of art as it is expressed in his first three works; "the Euro-African novels," with apologies to Ngugi wa Thiong'o. This declaration, Armah's artistic manifesto, is politically loaded and signifies secondarily the aesthetic ideology of Brecht and Benjamin. It requires a careful unpacking and qualification. Even though the declaration might echo Brechtian and Benjaminian artistic thought, the ideas it implicitly expresses are derivatives of African aesthetic thought as well: the traditional African insistence on the functionality of art. Armah is a novelist, a critic and an intellectual activist who gives active and sustained support to what he describes as "changing Africa's social realities for the better" (26 August 1985, p. 1753). The conviction that the continent of Africa can be changed for the better permeates his writing and activism: a conviction that finds powerful expression in *Why Are We So Blest?* spilling over into, and again in, *Two Thousand Seasons*. For Armah, it means the recasting of the tool he proffers for the execution of this project: the novel. He is no longer interested in a work of art which conceals the reality of the African condition. His preoccupation now is how to get the social arrangements hidden beneath such works of art across to the ordinary people. Further, he is calling for the debunking of the Western art form that defines the author as a specialist so that the author also becomes a producer in keeping with African aesthetic practice. The author's solidarity with the African people is derived then from the identity of both as producers. Indeed, a critical look at the life of Armah clarifies this point. Essentially, Armah contrasts two artistic traditions here to insinuate two worlds: the Western world and the African world; they are worlds apart, separate. The former is individualistic and the latter is communalistic. According to Armah, the Western world is based on the Cartesian injunction that "I think, therefore I am." It is a world grounded in individualism, believing strongly in independent action as opposed to co-operation. It is a world where the human being is

considered as a separate being from others or as having an independent existence.

That the Western novel form is incapable of the task of healing Africa's multiple fractures is contained in the precursors of *Two Thousand Seasons: The Beautyful Ones Are Not yet Born* (1968, 2008), *Fragments* (1970; 2006), and *Why Are We So Blest?* (1972). As explained in the epigraph, Armah is well-informed of the falsity of the view that the novel developed as a form created by the isolated individual and, therefore, it legitimizes reality based on individual experience which from the African worldview. From the African communal point of view, what is real is formed by the relation of the individual to the collective. The declaration itself suggests that Armah has a good idea of what the ideological formation of the Western novel is. And it is that knowledge, coupled with what he had intended to do with the novel, which fuelled the cataclysmic declaration in *Why Are We So Blest?* (1972). Given the communal African cultural consciousness, the poetics of the Western canonical novel is grossly incommensurable with the representation of African reality. It is the opposite of established norms and values of the African world. For Armah, therefore, the legitimizing of the Western novel form in African literature stands in direct opposite to African cultural reality. What, then, is the African world that Armah is bent on nurturing in his writing and activism to supplant the Manichean colonialist world of the West in the representation of African reality?

The African World

The African world is implied in Ankonam's declaration, but it is given full expression in the craft of *Two Thousand Seasons*, the successor of *Why Are We So Blest?* The African world is a communal one where the injunction is "I am, because we are." The sense of community that is said to characterise social relations among in-

dividuals in African societies, of which *Two Thousand Seasons* is a template, is a direct consequence of the communitarian social arrangement. This sense of community, which has become the cornerstone of Armah's writing and activism, is a characteristic that defines the community's "Africanness." No person is an island in the African communal world. As Susan Morgan, my dissertation supervisor puts it, "no island is an island." This is true of the African communal world Armah projects in his work and activism. For Armah—a person who has always conceived of himself as fully situated in an African world with African obligations and a commitment to Africa's future, a commitment which is fully consistent with his writing and activism—there is the need to "destroy" the colonial structures of oppression and replace them with African models for the purposes of the African project: the "re-membering" of Africa. Armah is of the view that it is incumbent upon Africans to engage seriously in a cultural clearing of the post-colonial landscape of Africa to make way for the cultivation of African models. According to the logic of Armah's manifesto, if that is not done the cultivation of African models will get stifled, thereby stunting the continent's growth and development. The anecdote of Aboliga the Frog in *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and the novel's stifling, life-denying structure are metonymic of the consequence of the inability of the Nkrumah regime to replace "the European colonial economic and social model" (Armah, 1968, 2008, p. 14) with an African one. The same can be said of *Fragments* and *Why Are We So Blest?* However, it is out of them that *Two Thousand Seasons* emerged like a plant in search of light. Let us now turn to *Two Thousand Seasons* and the call to Africa to come back to "the way, our way."

Two Thousand Seasons: Come Back Africa

Two Thousand Seasons is a revolutionary new departure from the theory and practice of the Western canonical novel form. Like a subterranean stream, this novel has eaten its way by degrees through the Western—informed literary structures of *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, *Fragments*, and *Why Are We So Blest?* to erupt and achieve its status and identity as *Two Thousand Seasons. Two Thousand Seasons* is not a rejection of the novel form, or the elements of the novel as such; if anything at all, it is a rejection rather of the Cartesian individualistic consciousness that is the foundation and spirit of the Western novel. What takes place in *Two Thousand Seasons* is that the elements of the novel are injected with elements of the African communal ideology which, for instance, lends characterisation or point of view in this novel an African communal agreement. As opposed to the highly individualizing character of the Western novel, which Benjamin graphically depicts above, in *Two Thousand Seasons*, Armah seeks to communalise the novel form and create a democratic space in it in consonance with African communitarian cultural practice. Therefore, he assumes the position of the craftsman of the communal voice, the communal consciousness more concerned with the collective, rather than the individual sensibility that inhabits the Western novel. The vast majority of Western literary narratives consist centrally of the stories of one individual in isolation or of a limited number of interacting individuals. That is a representation of Western way of life. But Armah's about-turn, clearly exhibited in *Two Thousand Seasons*, also redefines what it takes to be an artist in modern day Africa. So, what many critics lament as the decline of his writing actually becomes the foundation for something positive, which could be seen as the redefinition of who an African author is, as well as a radical recasting of the novel structure. I suggest this is what happens in his post—*Why Are We So Blest?* novels. Armah's choice of point of view, mode of characteri-

zation and use of language in *Two Thousand Seasons* reveal not only the value system of the African communalistic world. It also brings to the fore the promised revolutionary recasting of the novel form.

The point of view of this novel—the communal "We" perspective—is a clear demonstration of the African worldview. It is an attempt to break out of our imposed Euro-American worldview, thereby liberating us from a dead ontology which prevents us from experiencing our world, the African world. One of Armah's most important tasks, so far as his writing and activism are concerned, is the attempt to free Africans from the Euro-American worldview which prevents us from experiencing our African world as it really is, rather than what the Euro-American world thinks it ought to be. Generally, the choice of a point of view from which a story is told is arguably the most important single decision that the novelist has to make, for it fundamentally affects the way readers will respond emotionally and morally, to the fictional characters and their actions. Armah's choice of the communal "We" point of view in *Two Thousand Seasons*, a point of view which is inclusive of the narrator as well as the people of Africa, indicates to the reader that we are a community and that each and every one of us is part of this community precisely because as a community we do not stand apart from one another. This is the point Foli emphasizes in his libation in *Fragments* prior to Baako's departure for further studies in the West where solipsism is the rhythm of life:

Where you are going

> go softly
> Nananom
> you who have gone before
> see that his body does not lead him
> into snares made for the death of spirits
> You who are going now,
> do not let your mind become persuaded

that you walk alone.
There are no humans born alone.
You are a piece of us,
of those gone before
and who will come again
a piece of us, go
and come a piece of us.
You will not be coming,
when you come,
the way you went away.
You will come stronger,
to make us stronger,
wiser,
to guide us with your wisdom.
Gain much from this going.
Gain the wisdom
to turn your back on the wisdom
of Ananse.
Do not be persuaded you will fill your stomach faster
if you do not have others' to fill
There are no humans who walk this earth alone (1971, p. 5).

The significance of Foli's libation is this: Onipa Baako was raised for living in cooperation with his community. Now he is about to travel to a "severely competitive and acquisitive society" (Busia, 1962, p.34) to further his education. The prayer, then, is to remind him of who he is and what obtains at the country where he is going to study. His uncle is telling him through the libation that he should always remember that he is part of a whole. He is not alone and he must never consider himself alone wherever he finds himself; hence the libation ends on the emphatic tone of finality: "There are no humans who walk this earth alone."

This communal "We" rhetorical pattern begins right from *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* through to *Two Thousand Seasons*, giving structure and meaning to Armah's writing and activism, to the extent that it has become a leitmotiv of his writing and activism. The last paragraph of the inspiring speech of "the new man"—Kwame Nkrumah then—ends on the note of the litany of

community and co-operation which is a feature of Armah's art. Hear him: "[a]lone, I am nothing. I have nothing. We have power. But we will never know it; we will never see it work. Unless we choose to come together to make it work. Let us come together… Let us… We…. We…. We…. Freedom…. Freeeeeeeedom!" (Armah 1968, 2008, p.138). So, the communal "We" perspective implicitly acknowledges the existence of others whose existence is a given. This is because, by the very fact that I am in the world, I am already involved with others I might not even know. I do not have to prove that they exist in order to make sense of them, because I cannot make sense of myself without them. This is the African world and the African worldview: the worldview that Foli drills into the mind of his nephew prior to his departure to the West, the citadel of individualism, to study. As the narrator tells the audience at the end of *Two Thousand Seasons*: "[t]here is no beauty but in relationships. Nothing cut off by itself is beautiful. Never can things in destructive relationships be beautiful. All beauty is in the creative purpose of our relationships; all ugliness is in the destructive aims of the destroyers' arrangements" (1973, 2000, p.317). This quotation is also a reiteration of the absolute need for African Unity, what Armah describes as "remembering the dismembered continent"—the absolute need to repair the damage inflicted on Africa at the Berlin Conference of 1884 -1885. Benedict Anderson argues in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* that works of art—particularly novels—helped to create national communities by their postulation of and appeal to a broad community of readers. "Fiction," Anderson writes, "seeps quietly and continuously into reality, creating that remarkable confidence of community in anonymity which is the hallmark of modern nations" (1983, 2006, p.36). In other words, literature in general, and the novel in particular, has the capacity of bringing people together: it has the capacity of mentally closing the distance between individuals or

communities at the level of the imagination. Thus it is that a reader of *Two Thousand Seasons* in Umtata, South Africa, for instance, does so under the presumption that there are fellow readers of this book in Abeokuta, Nigeria, or somewhere else in Africa or the African diaspora. Similarly, the craft of *Two Thousand Seasons* and the author's choice of the communal "We" perspective to address the African people in an incantatory manner are consciously made to awaken in the hearts of the African people that feeling of unavoidable solidarity which binds human beings to each other, creating an African imagined community. The feat of the twenty courageous men and women, for example, is suggestive of what contemporary Africans ought to do to restore Africa to "the way, our way."

The plot structure of this novel—the circumstances surrounding the capture and the subsequent struggle of twenty gallant African men and women to liberate themselves from captivity, and their return to the continent to work to bring it back to consciousness—serves, potentially, to awaken the African people from their colonially induced lethargy. It reinforces the call on the African people by the communal narrator, the voice of the community, the source of its knowledge and its traditions, to come back to "the way, our way," something that the very existence of the African people depend on. The narrative, which is representative of the African narrative, in this case is not filtered through the consciousness of a single observer, or what Jonathan Culler describes as "contaminating intermediaries." It is the narrative of Africans by Africans for Africans, presenting a critical challenge to the codes and canons of both the theory and the practice of the novel and its criticism as they have been developed in the West. Characterization in *Two Thousand Seasons*, which is also rooted in the African communal ethos, is a rejection of the solipsistic philosophy that underpins the Western canonical novel form. Character and characterization in fiction, so we are told and taught, should be com-

plex, rich, developing and many-sided, but Armah's characters in *Two Thousand Seasons* in particular embody none of these prescriptions. This is because they are products of a different cultural consciousness, not because—as critics who are schooled in the theory and practice of Western literature assume—they are defectively drawn. They are true to a kind of cultural experience different from the Western kind. The point here is that *Two Thousand Seasons*, as a new departure of the African novel, is a radical experimentation in the service of African reality. It is a radical rejection of the imposition of the Western form of the novel, which is a Western ideological formation and, therefore, a representation of Western thought. And as a representation of Western thought, it is without doubt embedded and interwoven in Western worldview, the worldview of which the poetics of *Two Thousand Seasons* is a divestment. The communal ethos is the fundamental truth from which point of view and characterization are derived in this novel. It is the very foundation of *Two Thousand Seasons* and it is Armah's philosophy of life. He lives it. Looked at critically from *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* through to *Two Thousand Seasons*, it is clear that Armah's writing up to *Two Thousand Seasons* was a conscious struggle to return to what he describes in *Two Thousand Seasons* as "the way, our way," of which the novel itself is symbolic. What immediately arrests the attention of the reader of *Two Thousand Seasons* is the incantatory rhythms and repetitions in the language of the novel and the presumed presence of a live audience to which I now turn.

The linguistics of the world of Two Thousand Seasons

Two Thousand Seasons is a text, but its style is one preserving recognisable *oral* patterning. It is a conscious simulation of an African oral storytelling session, demonstrating characteristics of an

oral expression: namely, an implied active audience, and audience participation, repetition and modulation of voice for communicative effect, co-ordination and syntactical parallelism. Therefore, what the reader comes into forceful contact with right from the beginning of this novel is the presumed presence of an implied active audience as well as the magisterial attitude, attribute and tone of the communal "We" narrator. The narrative is intermittently interjected by members of the narrator's alert audience in this case to announce their presence and their active involvement in shaping the narrative, their narrative. The following interjections are exciting:

> Who was it prophesying? And what was it she said to pierce our comfort, the ease of ages? (1973, 2000, p.34).

and

> Who asks to hear the mention of the predators' names? Who would hear again the cursed names of the predator chieftains? With which stinking name shall we begin? (1973, 2000, p.50).

or

> … why break our ears with all the names, all the choices? (1973, 2000, p.153).

Audience participation and response—what modernity calls "call and response"—is an integral part of African spoken art. But in the context of the craft of *Two Thousand Seasons*, Armah has given it a creative artistic processing to give the novel an African attribute, thereby domesticating it. What the reader experiences in this novel is a conscious provocation of the presumed audience by the communal "We" narrator to announce their presence. This is not necessary in a live performance, because African art is an interactive, vital, integrated, and a communal everyday activity, and this is precisely what Armah aims at in this novel. As Robert Fraser

points out, Armah has evidently become increasingly concerned with the democratic

> basis of his art. There has been a marked effort to reach out beyond the confines of the literati and the university intelligentsia to the larger potential reading public, and hence hopefully to recapture some of the wider ancestral appeal of the oral artist. The translation of The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born into Swahili, the lingua franca of East Africa, might be taken as one instance of this. The relative directness and wide appeal of his later novels must be seen as another. The direction which his style and narrative manner have taken can hence be viewed, not so much as the result of pressures which have accumulated within the art itself, as the product of a growing awareness of the social context within which the professional artist in Africa must operate (1980, p.x).

This concern—the search for a simplified kind of writing distinguished from the hieratic, the search for the kind of writing which will make it possible for the artist to be in touch and stay in touch with the ordinary people of Africa—pervades the writing of Armah. It is profusely demonstrated in the craft of *Two Thousand Seasons* through the deployment of the techniques of orality: repetition, parallelism, co-ordination, transliteration of Ghanaian vernacular expressions to create and sustain the appearance of an oral storytelling session. What Armah is concerned with in *Two Thousand Seasons* is to reach a larger audience, the ordinary Africans. This is because there are intelligent Africans, ordinary people, who want to know what is going on around them, and Armah thinks he has a duty to reach that constituency; or at the least, to create an artistic piece which will be intelligible within their own constituency. I think Solo Ankonam speaks for Armah in *Why Are We So Blest?* when he says: "[m]any nights I have dreamed of stories I would like to write, words which would invite the reader to nod with recognition and say, "Yes, in just this way I too have experienced the things he writes about." (1972, p.14; emphasis mine). As Toni Morrison writes:

the ability to be both print and oral literature: to combine those two aspects so that the stories can be read in silence, of course, but one should be able to hear them as well. It should try deliberately to make you stand up and make you feel something profoundly in the same way that a Black preacher requires his congregation to speak, to join him in the sermon, to behave in a certain way, to stand up and to weep and to cry and to accede or to change and to modify—to expand on the sermon that is being delivered. In the same way that a musician's music is enhanced when there is a response from the audience… Because it is the affective and participatory relationship between the artist or the speaker and the audience that is of primary importance… To make the story appear oral, meandering, effortless, spoken … to have the reader work with the author in the construction of the book—is what is important (1984, p. 341).

This is the indwelling creative principle of *Two Thousand Seasons*: to make the African people partners in the production of *Two Thousand Seasons*. Like Walter Benjamin and Bertolt Brecht, Armah shares the belief that knowledge must not only be lived, it must also be used in the service of humanity. So, as Robert Fraser points out, Armah is not interested in the people who just give his works academic treatment, the literati and the university intelligentsia; his perspective in *Two Thousand Seasons* is not academic. His objective is to use his writing in helping to change "Africa's social realities for the better" (Armah, 25 August 1985, p. 1753). He is acutely aware that words by themselves do not bring about change; change has been the function of sensitized and educated human beings. As such, he is keenly focused on affecting his readers and eventually turning them "into producers—that is, readers or spectators into collaborators" (Benjamin, 1999, p. 777). *Two Thousand Seasons* explicitly invites the active and committed participation of Africans in advancing the agenda of the social transformation of the continent. His interest is in creativity and creative people, and he thinks the Western colonialist system of education does not instil in the Western educated African the sense of work.

For Armah, "the end of a Western education is not work but self-indulgence. An education for worms and slugs" (1972, p.161).

What Armah asks is that the African intellectual must face the social reality of Africa and work to change, in his own words, "Africa's social realities for the better." Unfortunately, he does not think Western education is crafted to serve that purpose. His argument appears to make him a traitor to his class of education: he went to Achimota College in Ghana, then Harvard—one of the most prestigious universities in the Western world and a citadel of Western civilization—and finally Columbia, the latter two being in the United States. However, in the case of Armah, a novelist and thinker who is wary of the slavish imitation of ideas and epistemological structures having external origin, his apparent rebellion against Western art draws sustenance from African epistemological sources. His ideology is Africa. His revolution is Africa and Africans. So he seeks to pursue the writing of a novel genre which possesses some degree of inherent agency in consonance with traditional African literary practice. Art in Africa is functional.

Of all the techniques of oral storytelling, repetition as a mnemonic device and performativity is central, giving rise to what Ong describes as "formulaic expressions," which figure widely as an oral stylistic device in the novel (1982, p.34). So far as oral communication is concerned, memory is important to the highest degree, hence the need for repetition to trigger off memory. Considering the objective of Armah, by the power of the craft of *Two Thousand Seasons*, to make Africans literally hear the crucial all-African call to return to "the way, our way," memory and its revival become inevitable. This is exhibited in the simulation of the dynamics of the spoken words on the printed page, thereby bringing alive the cadences of spoken speech. Take the following excerpts, for example:

> Know this again. The way is not the rule of men. The way is never women rulingmen. The way is reciprocity. The way is not barrenness. Nor is the

> way this heedless fecundity. The way is not blind productivity. The way is creation knowing its purpose, wise in the withholding of itself from snares, from destroyers (1973, 2000, p.76).

or

> Our way is reciprocity. The way is wholeness. Our way knows no oppression. The way destroys oppression. Our way is hospitable to guests. The way repels destroyyers. Our way produces before it consumes. The way produces far more than it consumes. Our way creates. The way destroys only destruction (1973, 2000, p.76).

The repetition of "the way"—seven times in the first excerpt—and the highly rhythmic, balanced patterns aid recall by reviving memory. Co-ordination and parallelism, common features of oral style, are also distinctive characteristics of the style of *Two Thousand Seasons*. The narrator's skill in self-expression and ability to communicate freely with others by word of mouth is demonstrated in many ways in this text. Let us deliberate on the following:

> We heard also of the attempts of other white destroyers to reach other places. Here. We heard how they had reached Simpa, Anago, Bomey and Ahwei, but How they came to Anoa—ah, disastrous coming—we had not heard... (1973, 2000, p. 130).

or

> Ah, blind illusion of nostalgic spirits. Ah, self-murdering deafness of ears forever cut off from the quiet, reasonable call of our way (2000, p.234).

The manner and the context in which "ah" is expressed on all three occasions is one of the effective ways of the narrator's oralcy, as well as their ability to induce empathy from their target audience: the African people. Further, that "ah" may also be taken as the wistful sigh of a momentarily dejected man: in this case, the narrator. The point is that in the oral style of narration the voice of the narrator is subjected to strategic modulation for communicative effect; body language and facial expression form part of the oral communicative process. But these cannot be expressed in a

written form. So Armah resorts to the representation of the oral technique of voice modulation in the narrative of Two Thousand Seasons.

Two Thousand Seasons is a comprehensive expression of "the way, our way" to which it is fervently calling colonially misdirected Africa to come back to. Not only is Two Thousand Seasons itself an African literary expression of "the way, our way," but this African literary expression also contains the habitual character and disposition of the African people: namely, our anthropology, economics, history, linguistics, philosophy, psychology, sociology, traditional medicine, traditional system of social and judicial administration and so on. For example, the style of the novel demonstrates a consciously worked out linguistic strategy of transliteration without subverting the semantic and syntactic structure of the white man's language, all in an effort to suggest possible solutions to the language problem in Africa. That is why in the novel time is reckoned in seasons so that years become "seasons"; and the following English names are given Ghanaian vernacular expressions: castle becomes, "the stone place," ; kitchen becomes, "the cooking place," and so on. There are also a sprinkling of Akan words and expressions like "twapea," (chewing stick) and "poano" (seashore). To extend my argument through the train of thought of Gerhard Fritschi, for an oral culture the brain must suffice to store and transmit the cultural code of the group. Further, to keep knowledge from being forgotten it is not only necessary to subject it to frequent repetition, but also "to structure information in such a way that man's psychic apparatus accepts and retains it" (Fritschi, 1983, p.13). It is this thought and understanding that informs the crafting of Two Thousand Seasons, a novel that is potentially written for the ear. African history and myth are also raised to the level of art in the experimentation process of this novel.

History and myth

Two Thousand Seasons is a composite of African history, African myth and an exhibition of individual artistry and talent, thereby giving the impression that African literature is the doing of African history and myth. Ghanaian oral tradition has it that once upon a time, in the Anlo area of the Volta Region of Ghana, a chief collaborated with the slave-raiders to capture twenty young men into slavery. The young men were told that the white slave-raiders were going to entertain them on their ship. They believed it and followed them into their ship only to be taken away. Essentially, then, the story of the twenty young African men and women captives could be a true story, given a radical artistic twist to make an important point: Africans are their own saviours. Further, Armah draws on the history of migration in Africa, focusing on the migration of the Akans, which is also a historical reality. However, African myth is the foundation of the formal structure and the communicative strategy of the novel. There is a sense in which Armah feels the need for Africans to cultivate a system imbued with African value systems to replace the oppressive and slavish Western model. The proverbial number seven, a product of established African mythologies, not only serves as a framework of the novel, but also as a symbol of unity and in this case African unity. It is a lucky number which is also factored into the speeches of the communal leadership in the novel. These resources are not the invention of Armah; they have been in existence in the African cultural discursive setting. They are communal cultural resources, a fact which Armah himself has repeated over and over again. He writes: "[t]he myths of Africa are a storehouse of images, symbols, words, narratives and ideas that we are free to use, if we feel called to such work, for invoking a future made of the best values we can know. What we can take there is the opposite of what the killers offer us today… (1971, 2006, p. 262). And these are myths familiar to the African people. In this way, Armah's choice

of myths in *Two Thousand Seasons* is dependent on their familiarity to the African people. According to Ralph Ellison, the Black American novelist, they can be simple or elaborate, but they are the connective tissue between the narrator and the reader or the audience. They embody the values, the cultural generalizations and the philosophical precepts by which the people live. The narrative of this novel is predicated on the history of Akan migration, as well as Akan folklore, and the reference in the narrative to the old woman and the seven children has to do with the seven clans of the Akans. In the narrative of *Two Thousand Seasons*, they are representative of the African people. As Busia correctly points out, "Africa is a vast continent, inhabited by communities that have had different historical experiences. One should be chary in describing as African culture the traditions and way of life of any one community." "But," he continues, "we often understand the greater from the smaller—moving legitimately and logically from the particular to the general—and the experience of one African community may help us to understand, by comparison or contrast, the problem of the larger whole" (1962, p.7-8). I think it is in this sense that Akan culture must be seen as a trope in the narrative of *Two Thousand Seasons*.

Two Thousand Seasons is doused in African culture and thought; and, the only issue that appears to be detraction from its "Africanness,"—even though I don't think that does detract *Two Thousand Seasons* from its stature as the African novel *par excellence*—is the language question in African writing. Armah is keenly aware of, and disturbed by, 'the language question'. In truth, it shows in his use of the English language in this novel. A characteristic of Armah as a creative writer and a thinker is that he has the habit of using his novels to express his thoughts about critical issues in Africa and African literature, all the time suggesting approaches that can be carried out. The language question in African literature is one of such critical issues. He agrees absolutely with

the need for African writers to write in an African language, an African lingua franca. However, given the linguistic confusion on the continent, he thinks the way forward, typical of him, is a thoughtful continent-wide solution geared towards finding a permanent solution to it. Anything short of that, for him, amounts to "looking into the rear view mirror" (29 April 1985, p.832). Another crucial observation one can make about the novels of Armah is this: just as African oral traditions and narratives are capsules of knowledge about Africa, so are the novels of Armah; they are encyclopaedic so far as knowledge about Africa is concerned. As the Dangme people of Ghana always say about Klama Cult, their oral tradition: "Klama is our school." Indeed, it is a capsule of knowledge about the Dangme people of Ghana: their history, their philosophy, their traditional medicine, their oral literature and so on. The only problem I have with the cult is that it is an elitist traditional institution. But that is another matter. The point here is that in traditional Africa works of art are designed with special regard to purpose and practical use and this is an important principle which Armah factors into his creative writing, without the elitism associated with the "Klama School," for example. This is also a practice one finds in the composition of Black-American Blues songs which provide a dossier of aspects of Black American history not available in history books. Armah puts premium on the functionality and accessibility of his creative writing and *Two Thousand Seasons* is a classic example. I think what is missing in the critical appreciation of Armah's writing is our inability to fathom the driving force behind it: the African has to be made aware of their state of alienation in order to be able to change their social conditions. The principle that links Armah's writing and social activism into a coherent whole has been the idea of process, that nothing is determined, absolute and fixed, but subject to influence and change. Consequently, for Armah, the pres-

ent dire condition of Africa can be changed. And I dare say that the process of change is in progress on the quiet.

As I have hinted at the beginning of the paper, Ayi Kwei Armah is not the only African writer notable for experimentation in fiction in African literature. Chinua Achebe, Ama Ata Aidoo, Kofi Awoonor, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Kojo Laing, Amos Tutuola, Ousmane Sembene, Wole Soyinka are some of the names that come to mind. The experimentation of most of them, if not all, involves the incorporation of African oral traditions into the novel form. Therefore, their novels, which are subjects of experimentation, ostentatiously deviate from the Western-received ways of representing reality, either in narrative organization or in style, or in both, to change our perception of that reality. Moreover, one cannot credit the technique of deploying African oral traditions in the African experimental novel to any particular writer, because these writers put them to different uses, as their works clearly testify. It is a clear demonstration of tradition and individual talent at its best, I think. The experimentation of Armah and Ngugi in particular is dictated largely by demotic considerations: the need to reach the "common people." This is uppermost in the scheme of Armah's writing. The late Ousmane Sembene, an established novelist, resorted to cinematography precisely because he had wanted to communicate with the ordinary people, to close the communicative gap between African literary production and the ordinary people. What is holding back African novelists like Armah from going into cinematography is that it is extremely expensive with an extremely. However, I have a feeling that the idea is receiving serious consideration and that Armah and Ngugi are just awaiting a favourable moment. I think the novels of Armah, for example, are structured to lend themselves to cinematographic construction when the time arrives. The on-going experimentation in African fiction has been the subject of negative and sometimes condescending evaluation which must be addressed, even if pa-

renthetically. It might clear up some cultural, social, and historical misunderstanding of the experimentation and the direction of African fiction and African literature generally.

The African experimental novel and its criticism

The poetics of *Two Thousand Seasons*—a novel genre of "the way, our way"—demonstrates among other things that criticism is an accepted, inevitable part of literary creativity; that literary creativity is participatory and communal, to the extent that it can be argued that the idea of the author is a modern day capitalist economic invention in African literature, and that authorship in traditional Africa is vested in the community. The reason is that works of art are considered communally produced and owned. However, the logic of modern day capitalist social and economic structure, as well as the seeming "death" of African oral tradition as a result of the invention of printing and writing, has contributed to the creation of the idea of authorship in modern African writing. Theirs is a calling and the raw material they use in their works—Armah keeps hammering this point in his utterances—have already been created. What is required is the application of their individual talents in the literary assembling of these literary parts in their works. The authorship of *Two Thousand Seasons*, for example, I would like to believe, does not assume to be the origin of the narrative of the novel in the sense in which Foucault attacks the concept and authority of the author in "What is An Author?" (1984). Presumably, it is the function of the community of which the narrator, not necessarily Armah, forms a part. I think the author-position of Ayi Kwei Armah in the scheme of *Two Thousand Seasons*, a paradigm of the African novel which draws literary nutrients freely from a reservoir of "sources and resources of African literature," is purely economic. This, in my opinion, is reasonably

so. That Armah is involved in the paratextual elements of his work must not be interpreted to mean that African writers or most African writers do the same. Historically and ideologically, Per Ankh was, and ought to be seen as, an urgent demand that needed to be dealt with by Africans and their writers, and that Armah happened to be the prime mover of the idea was one of the travesties of our history. But I think that the establishment of Per Ankh is a declaration of the need for Africans to be independent of external manipulation. What Armah does best is that he uses his activism and writing to remind his people constantly of critical social problems, all the time suggesting carefully thought through solutions as well. One of the themes that receive such mnemonic handling in *Two Thousand Seasons* is the community and the communal ownership of artworks and, indeed, knowledge and its production in traditional Africa and, consequently, the absence of what Armah calls "the stamp of ownership" (2010, p.131) syndrome in traditional African literature and philosophy. *Two Thousand Seasons* does not only give clear and loud expressions to these thematic statements; the novel itself is an example as well as a collection of examples of what is and what ought to be as well as what must be done. It is—to borrow the phrase of the Franco-Czech novelist Milan Kundera—Africa's "map of existence" (2000, p.15).

The point needs stressing here that in this African novel a collective narrative agent occupies the protagonist role. And the protagonist is the community, not an individual as it is expected in the Western solipsistic novel. As Uri Margolin claims in his essay "Telling in the Plural: From Grammar to Ideology" (2000), an essay which makes reference to Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons*, among predominantly Western novels, in Armah's novel the individual is represented as part of a collectivity or an African cultural self; and this is a reality in African cultural practice. So it is that a character like Isanusi, an individual, has devoted his life to the service of the we-group in the novel. In all of this, the narrative as

a whole is primarily the group's narrative. The we-group in the narrative of the novel share group concerns and act on those concerns jointly. To hammer home the point further, when Nelson Mandela was released from prison, there were calls from all over the world congratulating him. In a response to one of such calls on CNN, he said something like this: "I do appreciate your calls, but I'd like to make one thing clear: what we are experiencing today is the work of a group of South Africans of whom I am just a part. And so the credit is for the group: Walter Sisulu, Oliver Tambo and others. I think that must be made clear." Finally, when Dr. Rosemary Brown, the first Black Canadian elected to public office, remarked: "[u]ntil all of us have made it, none of us have made it," she was expressing a fundamental African social philosophy of communalism and oneness. This is an important part of the make-up of *Two Thousand Seasons* and, therefore, the African novel.

That said, permit me to quote Robert Scholes on the aberrations in the criticism of the novel in general and therefore the African novel in particular:

> [a] recurrent tendency in criticism is the establishment of false norms for the evaluation of literary works. To mention a few instances in the criticism of fiction, we can find Henry James and Co. attacking the intrusive narrator in Fielding and Thackery; or Wayne Booth attacking the ambiguity of James Joyce; or Erlich Auerbach attacking the multiple reflections of consciousness in much modern fiction. The reasons for these critical aberrations are most clearly diagnosable when we see them as failures in generic logic. Henry James set up his own kind of fiction as a norm for the novel as a whole, because he was unable or unwilling to see the term novel as a loose designation for a wide variety of fictional types. In a similar though opposed fashion, Wayne Booth set up eighteenth-century rhetorical-didactic fiction as his norm. And Erlich Auerbach set up nineteenth-century European realism as his… … since even the very best critics of fiction—men of sensitivity, learning, and acumen—can go wrong when they seek evaluative principles that cross generic boundaries, we should consciously try to guard against monistic evaluation by paying

really careful attention to generic types and their special qualities (1977, 43-44).

There are critics of fiction today, students of Henry James, Wayne Booth, Erlich Auerbach, following the footsteps of their teachers and admirers, totally ignoring the importance of genre theory, particularly in their criticism of experimental African fiction. They refuse to accept the fact that the experimental African novelist works in a tradition (African), and their achievements can be most clearly measured in terms of the tradition (African tradition) in which they work. As a genre, the African novel, like all genres, "brings to light the constitutive features of [African society] to which [it] belongs" (Todorov, 1990, p.19). So there are windows on the African experimental novel which enable the critic to peep into it and search for knowledge and understanding. But as "failures in generic logic," these critics are "unwilling to see the term novel as a loose designation for a wide variety of fictional types" of which the African novel is one. As a consequence, they end up finding rigid Western templates against which all novels, irrespective of their cultural and social context, are forced to fit. But now there is a forceful eruption of positive critical opinion emanating from the Western critical establishment concerning the critical evaluation of the novel, an occurrence which amounts to saving the right. I am referring here to Margaret Anne Doody's comprehensively researched *The True Story of the Novel* (1997).

The title—*The True Story of the Novel*—of Doody's book is very interesting. It is of critical interest because it implies the hitherto critical concealment of the true story of the novel. But, according to Doody, the truth about especially the origin of the novel must be told. As she writes:

I had long felt dissatisfied with the version of the history of the novel on which I had been bred in the 1950s and 1960 (p. Xvii). If writers and critics who, like myself are undeniably Western want to explain to ourselves and others who we are and what we in the West have been doing and

thinking during our history—say in the past couple of millennia or so—we need to be ready to correct and amplify the story that we tell ourselves. Otherwise we will mislead ourselves and others (p. 3).

It is from the preceding reason that *The True Story of the Novel* is told. Doody ends her well researched book on this note:

> [w]hat my sort of interpretation of the genre itself, of the novel as Novel, does not allow is our making narrow definitions of the genre and shutting out half of the prose fiction of the world. My reading will also not allow national and temporal boundaries to be the perdurable affairs they are often imagined to be. Like Herodotus, I wish to show that Asia and Africa were (and are)in contact with Europe, and to assure us that our literary history depends on a mixture, an interchange of all of these—with , it must be added, the Americas, Pacific Islands, New Zealand, Australia, and so forth. The history of the Novel is never pure. The stories told by the Novel are not "pure." They are stories of mixture and variety, of boundary crossing and changing. The novel itself is not "pure" and refuses ever to pretend to be so… (1997, p. 484-485).

Apparently, it is in collaboration with the critical sentiments Doody expresses in The True Story of the Novel that Terry Eagleton writes Chapter One—"What is a Novel?"—of *The English Novel: An Introduction*. In this introductory chapter, Eagleton, like Doody before him, exposes the critical malfeasance about the origin and the definition of the novel in an objective and scientific mode of argument. For example, he writes:

> [t]he point about the novel … is not just that it eludes definitions, but that it actively undermines them … It cannibalizes other literary modes and mixes the bits and pieces promiscuously together … The novel quotes, parodies, and transforms other genres, converting its literary ancestor into mere components of itself in a kind of Oedipal vengeance on them … The novel is a mighty melting pot, a mongrel among literary thoroughbreds. There seems to be nothing it cannot do (2005, p.1).

At this point, a work that pops to mind is Ama Ata Aidoo's seemingly problematic *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977). Is it a novel or not? If it is not a novel, then what is it? The author herself claims—wisely, I

think—she doesn't know and that she has left it to the critics to determine what it is:

> I never describe it as a novel myself. When I have been forced to describe Killjoy. I have said it is fiction in four episodes. As to its verse-prose style, it was almost an unconscious decision. There was no way I could have written that book in any other style. It seems that there were different tempos in terms of the prose, the narrative and what constituted the reflections of the major character. It seems to me to be the most appropriate way to have written that book. As I said earlier on, I leave the critic to say whether it is a novel or not (James, 1990, p. 15).

What Ama Ata Aidoo has left out, consciously perhaps, is that traditionally African literature is a composite of drama, prose, and verse: what a critic described as "total art." The three main genres live together. Like *Two Thousand Seasons*, which is the subject-matter of this discussion, *Our Sister Killjoy* draws deep from the African oral traditional rich literary storage. A characteristic of African oral traditional artistic products, which Two Thousand Seasons abundantly demonstrates, *Our Sister Killjoy* displays signs of possessing some degree of inherent agency. *Two Thousand Seasons* is certainly a statement or verb, that itself constitutes the actions it describes. The important point here is that modern African literature owes a lot to its African oral traditional heritage and this must be taken into account in the discussion of matters of literary antecedents. In his classic essay on the novel—"Epic and Novel: Toward a Methodology for the Study of the Novel" (1981), a work that, in my view, leads the way in suggesting the system of methods and rules applicable to our understanding and appreciation of the novel, Bakhtin has said as much as Doody and Eagleton: the novel is a fluid art form. Like Doody and Eagleton, in "Epic and Novel," Bakhtin gives proof of the novel's unique nature by contrasting it with the epic. According to Bakhtin, the novel as a genre is unique in that it is able to embrace, ingest, and devour other genres while still maintaining its status as a

novel. Analogically, then, the Novel, a complex genre, is comparable to a huge sprawling river and the streams that flow into it to swell it—the genres of the novel. One can, therefore, argue that the Novel is a confluence, a flowing together, of genres of the novel. That is to say, the African novel is, and must be seen as, a genre of the overarching Novel. This brings us to the next critical issue: the question of influence.

Influence, which immediately evokes originality and plagiarism so far as literary creativity in Africa is concerned, is "a dynamic principle of creativity." It is the oxygen of creativity, and apart from God, no human being is known to have created anything out of nothing. It is a means to an end and this is the reason

> [a] discussion of influences upon a work of imaginative writing [ought to] consider how far they have been ingested into the texture and general outlook of the work (or works) and also how they have been transcended by the writer (or writers), if at all, in finding a distinctive identity of voice or aesthetic effect. The fact of influence, that is, becomes more meaningful in critical observation when its scope and nature are defined in relation to the responsive individuality of use within the new hosting framework (Jabbi, 1980, p.51).

I am not a creative writer and I do not claim to be one, but I have always considered the role of influence in creative writing or creativity generally comparable to what petrol or gas does in a motor engine and therefore the motor car. It passes energy into the motor car to enable it perform a function: transport people from one point to another, for example. What happens is that the petrol gets used up in the process, but the function would have been performed anyway. And at that point what interests us is what is achieved by means of the petrol and not the petrol per se. I think that this is what occurs in creativity or imaginative writing by a good writer who is influenced. Influence helps the good writer or creator to give birth to a unique piece of work. No good writer, therefore, is diminished by being influenced. But much as influ-

ence is the fuel that propels the creative machine, it is not a one-way traffic. It works both ways. For instance, according to Shils, "[t]he laying open of Africa to explorers and colonisers was followed by the bringing back to Europe of works of African art which were assimilated into and changed greatly the tradition of European painting and sculpture" (1981, p.260). As Soyinka reveals, Shils' claim is "manifested so robustly in the works and artistic manifestos of Gauguin, Kandinsky, Brancusi, Cezanne, Picasso and so on" (1999, p.33). This is well known in Western critical circles, but it appears to be wilfully ignored as a result of Western critical proclivity for malfeasance. In all of this, the African novel is the most traduced. But the truth is that the borrowing of artistic ideas and forms, adapting and adopting them to bear the burden of African experience, is ours through history. And this has been partly the sub-text of African critical reaction against the negative and unproductive criticism of the African novel. I think given our history of Western colonization and the subsequent imposition of Western values and practices particularly through a carefully crafted Western system of education, what Gauri Viswanathan (1989) describes as "mask of conquest", it cannot be denied that African culture is made up of some elements that must have been appropriated from Western colonialist culture and have become part of our African tradition. Nobody denies that historical inevitability and reality. In the words of Kofi Busia:

> [s]urvivals of extremely old cultures can be found alongside recently borrowed inventions and ideas. The old and the new are both part of Africa as it is today. The talking drum belongs as much to contemporary African cultures as does the telegraph or the jazz band; the baby at its mother's back as much as the baby In the pram; the lineage or clan as much as the trade union or the political party; the chief as much as the president. All have been accepted and incorporated into the ever-changing and growing cultures that constitute Africa's way of life (1962, p.39).

But the fact of the matter is that—and this is the logic that under-pins Armah's writing and activism, neatly capsulated in the de-claration made in *Why Are We So Blest?*—Africans have a rich re-sidual African cultural heritage our writers can and do defer to. And *Two Thousand Seasons* is an obtrusive example. That Africa must be re-cultivated in its own image, for Armah, is a task that must be taken seriously, and he has made an example of himself. It is no exaggeration to say that he has dedicated his writing and life to the important work of reclaiming Africa.

The reclamation of Africa in its own image at once implicates the concept of identity which, I think, must be critically looked at in the context of this paper. According to Alan Dundes (May 1984), the word *identity* derives from the Latin *idem* meaning 'the same.' And yet, he goes on, it is obvious from all of the scholarly discussions that "identity" depends as much upon differences as upon similarities. He cites the claim of Heraclitus and much later St. Thomas Aquinas, referring to the metaphor of the flowing river, that at any one spot it is the same river but never the same water, while Locke and Hume refer to animate objects to exem-plify the notion that identity remains constant even if the physical constituents change. He concludes that the same principle can be applied to group identity. I am of the view that the same argu-ment can be made of African identity in particular, regardless of the ravages of the colonial enterprise. The pot in which salt is stored is never short of the taste of salt when the salt is used up, so goes a Dangme proverb. Identity is hardly absolutely de-stroyed when a people take on other identities. Let me say here in parenthesis that the claim of Heraclitus and St. Thomas Aquinas about the metaphor of "the flowing river that at one spot it is the same but never the same water," ties in with the arguments of Doody and others about the novel and its genres like the African novel. Hence the argument that the African novel is the same novel but it is different: it obviously entails contrast with, and re-

cognition by subscription of, the overarching novel. And that is what defines the African novel.

One lesson that *Two Thousand Seasons* teaches is that in the African traditional society a work of art is not an individual but a collective production. Art in all its form is a social activity, as the production of *Two Thousand Seasons* has clearly shown. Armah's experimentation, which *Two Thousand Seasons* makes an attested copy of, is a fundamental challenge to the logic of solipsism—the theory that self-existence is the only certainty, absolute egoism—which the Western canonical novel portrays is non-African, anti-African and exclusive. His experimentation with the novel, therefore, is to give the form an inclusive and populist innovation to make it an affective and effective communicative utterance in keeping with the requirements of works of art in traditional Africa. In writing *Two Thousand Seasons*, the novel that gives full expression to the *Why Are We So Blest?* declaration and "the way, our way," Armah turns to African literary antecedents what Kwabena Nketia describes as "the gems of the [African] past" (1964, p.62). One of such "gems" that Armah has dialogued with was *Chaka*, a historical epic written in 1909 by the Sotho author Thomas Mopoku Mofolo (1876—1948). A critical reading of his essay—"The Definitive Chaka" (1976)—does not leave any doubt at all in the reader's mind that Armah was in Lesotho to talk with the people to get a first-hand knowledge about Mofolo and Chaka. The result of that research was creatively processed into the crafting of *Two Thousand Seasons*. Indeed, he has left windows on the novel to enable the sceptics—those who think that Africa is bereft of literary models and that the idea of literary antecedents in (literary) creativity is strictly Western European—to peep into them and see things for themselves. The loud presences of Isanusi—Chaka's witchdoctor and a diviner—and Noliwe—Chaka's fiance, two prominent characters in *Chaka*—in *Two Thousand Seasons* are evidential although their roles differ in this novel. But that is to be

expected since entering into dialogue with literary antecedents is considered to be a valuable route to originality, making it new. What is happening in the experimentations in African literature, and I think this is also true of other formerly colonized countries, is that the writers have launched a canonical counter-discourse against the literary models, norms and values of their colonial education. And the reason is that the remaking of Africa demands African epistemological models and not the Western colonialist models that have spawned the atrophy of the Continent. This is uppermost in the minds of African artists and intellectuals and it bears repetition, I think, that it is the point of Armah's powerful and unforgettable declaration in *Why Are We So Blest?*

Conclusion: Praxis and Two Thousand Seasons

In conclusion, then, my answer to the eponymous question that sparked off this discussion, using *Two Thousand Seasons* as the representative African experimental novel, is this: African writers are seriously in the process of domesticating the novel. And like Wilson Harris who has rejected the conventions of the Western novel—a rejection which is exemplified in his craft of *Palace of the Peacock* (1960), Ayi Kwei Armah—unlike Wilson Harris—has in a radical manner discarded the Western canonical novel form and replaced it with a potentially democratising and democratic novel, presented in a mode suited to the ordinary African people, the ultimate objective of the experimentations of Armah and Ngugi. *Two Thousand Seasons* is a clear example of a radical novelist en-gaged in what is basically a democratic enterprise. He incorpo-rates the communal traditional storytelling structure into the nar-rative of this novel, deferring to a strategically composed oral style that provokes a state of immediacy, a direct appeal to intui-tive understanding of the message of the narrator by the reader. The praxis-oriented nature of *Two Thousand Seasons* demands that

the narrator must succeed in conveying their meaning to the reader. The success of the narrator in getting their meaning across to the reader is a mark of the triumph of the narrative as a communicative utterance. I think that is what Armah aims at in the narrative of *Two Thousand Seasons*, a novel which, both in content and form, illuminates the African worldview.

In the oral storytelling tradition in Africa, the tradition in which *Two Thousand Seasons* is deeply steeped, the storyteller is not apart from the audience; they live with the audience and within the narrative as well through the value system of their society. Armah has incorporated this artistic principle into the narrative of *Two Thousand Seasons*. He is present in the novel, and his presence is sensed and felt particularly through his deployment of the communal "We" perspective, characterization and praxis— something serving as an example to be copied. Unlike *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, *Fragments*, and *Why Are We So Blest?*, which are cyclically structured and closed forms, *Two Thousand Seasons* is in sharp contrast with them, providing no final events to close the narrative, no tying up of loose ends, nothing is fixed at the end. It is open-ended and optimistically futuristic:

> Soon we shall end this remembrance, the sound of it. It is the substance that continues. Soon it will end. Yet still, what a scene of carnage the white destroyers have brought here, what a destruction of bodies, what a death of souls! Against this what a vision of creation yet unknown, higher, much more profound than all erstwhile creation! What a hearing of the confluence of all the waters of life flowing to overwhelm the ashen desert's blight! What an utterance of the coming together of all the people of our way, the coming together of all people of the way (1973, 2000, p. 317).

Meaning, therefore, that there is a future for a United Africa, but it is contingent upon hard work and cerebration by African intellectuals.
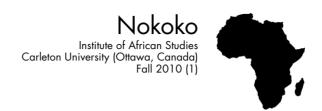
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A habitus of war and displacement?

Bourdieu's 'third way' and rural youth in Northern Uganda after two decades of war

Lara Rosenoff

> I want to learn about Acholi culture to make my future look like the one of others and to make me fit in the society, because I missed them when I was young and even when I was growing up. I would ask other Acholi to teach me the way of how to live with others.[1]

My work in Uganda has allowed me to meet Florence, a 15-year-old, orphaned, formerly abducted female head-of household. Her reflections on what she is 'missing' in the midst of the over two decade long war in Northern Uganda have prompted me to radically reconsider youth's experiences in, and perceptions of, conflict. It has been quite difficult to examine the ways that my ongoing relationship with Florence has shifted my conceptions about youth in conflict, and I have been struggling for quite some time without a comprehensive theoretical framework to ground my

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1   Interview with Florence (2008), Padibe IDP Camp, Northern Uganda.

thoughts, experiences and observations from the past three years. When long-term war, or crisis, is increasingly acknowledged as context (Vigh, 2008), Bourdieu's multi-level insights in the classic *Outline of a Theory of a Practice* (2008) into the nature of inquiries of the social world, provide very fruitful terms of analysis and methodological frameworks that can be especially useful in expanding difficult but vital discussions about socialization, identity formation, and war. His ideas around the convergence of structure and process within the socialized individual shed much light on how war as a social condition is practically manifested and navigated (Lubkemann, 2008).

Most discussions around youth in war tend to centre on the dichotomous contemporary realities of youth as both primary perpetrators and victims of conflict. As such, some have contemplated the structures that have produced war and youth's tenuous role within (Achvarina & Reich, 2006; Branch, forthcoming; Richards, 1996; Rosen, 2005; Utas, 2005; Wood, 2008). Other studies have focused on the effects of these physical realities on youth primarily within the psychosocial discourses of resilience and trauma (Boothby, Strang & Wessells, 2006; Eyber & Ager, 2004; Engle, Castle & Menon, 1996). My repeated experiences with Florence, however, hinted at something beyond these analyses. On several separate occasions, including the epigraphic conversation, Florence spoke about her perceived disconnection with Acholi society. Because she was an orphan in the midst of war and displacement, she somehow feels that she is missing some vital information to be a functioning and accepted member of her society. Recently, some other scholars have asked similar questions regarding socialization processes in war. Referring to her extensive experience in East Africa, Tefferi (2008) states that "conflict and displacement have led to the disruption of institutions and practices that would conventionally serve as a framework for the transition to adulthood" (p. 26). Jason Hart (2008) probes

the same issue, saying that "it [responsibilities placed on youth in conflict] should also lead us to wonder about the longer-term, societal consequences of conflict-induced situations in which children's transitions to full adult responsibility is truncated and occurs with little or no adult guidance" (p. 11).

Pierre Bourdieu's thoughts on 'how knowledge can be known' are interesting in light of Tefferi's and Hart's questions, Florence's revelations cited above, and my resulting dissatisfaction with both the objective (structural, statistical) and subjective (psychological, experiential) epistemological approaches to the problems of youth in conflict areas. Bourdieu states in *An Outline of a Theory of Practice* (2008) that "the social world may be the object of three modes of theoretical knowledge" (p. 3). The first is the objectivist mode examining structures, with an overall emphasis on the determining nature of macro social phenomena. The second is the phenomenological mode examining experience, with its overall emphasis on the micro and subjective construction of reality. The third acknowledges the limits of both and seeks to reconcile them in a dialectic of sorts that transcends the macro-micro dualism (Reay, 2004, p. 432). In this paper, I will apply Bourdieu's 'third way' to preliminary questions regarding the socialization of youth in long-term conflict zones. After a brief sketch of Florence's life from age 1 to 17, I will invoke Bourdieu's key concepts of *habitus*, *doxa* and *strategies* and will proceed by applying them in an analysis of one aspect of her life. Due to the constraints of space and time, it will be an incomplete offering, but hopefully one that sufficiently proves the continuing use value of Bourdieu's 'third way' of approaching problems of the social world with the aim of elucidating the abstruse realities of youth in conflict, specifically Florence's in the context of the war in Northern Uganda.

Born into war

The details of Florence's earlier years are quite hazy (as they are for many of us), and they are made even more so by the disorganizing and destructive nature of war and the loss of her parents. The current war between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Ugandan People's Defence Force (UPDF) began when the current President, Yoweri Museveni, came to power in 1986, about five years before Florence was born. Florence's father was killed when she was just one year old, and her mother soon returned to her own family's homestead nearby.[2] Florence does not remember much from this time except that she frequently slept in the bush with her brothers, away from the homestead, and that she heard a lot of gunfire. In 1997 (when she was six), her mother, brothers and she joined most of the rural population that fled to the outskirts of the district capital of Kitgum in response to massacres in the area that killed some 450 people (interview with Dolly Arach, July14, 2008). Her mother stayed with a man there who got sick and died of HIV/AIDS. After one year, the government opened 'protected villages', which were actually internal displacement camps with insufficient hygienic infrastructure and protection.[3] In 1998, Florence's mother opted to leave the outskirts of Kitgum town to return once again to her family's traditional lands instead of the internal displacement camps. Her mother died of HIV/AIDS in late 1999 when Florence was nine years old. Florence and her brothers spent the next years

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2   The Acholi are a patrilocal, patrilineal society. As such, a woman moves to her husband's family's land upon marriage. When Florence's father died, her mother returned to her own family's land.

3   The camps, although touted as an instrument of protection for the civilian population, were actually part of the government's military strategy. "It is no secret that high-ranking army officers want the camps to remain as a valid military strategy, as they regard all Acholi as potential rebel supporters who must be controlled and monitored" (Branch 19, ARLPI 2002a quoted in Finnstrom, 2008, p.142). This strategy resulted in grossly high death rates due to lack of infrastructure in the camps, with figures climbing to approximately 1000 excess death per week in 2005 (The Republic of Uganda -Ministry of Health, 2005).

hiding in the bush and gardening in order to survive, while most people in the surrounding villages moved (most forcibly by the UPDF) to the camps. With an escalation of the war after 2002 (resulting from Operation Iron Fist I and II[4]), she and her brothers were finally forced into Padibe Internally Displaced Persons' (IDP) camp. Florence was then abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army rebel group in 2005 while collecting food outside the camp perimeter, and escaped one year later, finally returning to Padibe IDP Camp to live with her brothers.

I first met Florence in January 2007, six months after a ceasefire which has since run out, when she was 15 years old. It was about a year after she escaped from the rebels and she was living again with her three brothers in Padibe IDP Camp.[5] The second time I met Florence (December 2007), she had fought with her brothers and was kicked out of the hut. The fight occurred when one of her brothers brought in a wife who caused conflict with Florence. On her own in a different area of the camp, Florence became pregnant with the child of a man who, by the time I visited that December, was in jail for defilement of another underage girl. My third trip (July 2008) found her living with Okot, the father of her child (who was released from prison), in yet a different area of the camp. Gum, her son, had been born the month before. Okot's family had much land near the camp, and he and Florence were in the process of building a home and preparing the gardens for a full move out of the camp.

Florence's formative years were characterized by loss of life, multiple displacements and instability. Her schooling was interrupted by the war from a very early age, from repeated bouts of

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4   "It is beyond doubt that the rebels suffered heavily under the Iron Fist campaigns. But in the wake of these campaigns, during which fighting in northern Uganda reached levels not experienced since the beginning of the war, the noncombatant population suffered more (Finnstrom, 2008, p.113).

5   Population of about 35000.

typhoid,[6] and from displacements between her father's and mother's family homesteads, the district capital, the internal displacement camp and various Lord's Resistance Army rebel camps in the bush. Kinship systems which had integrated orphans in the past had been severely affected by the war and its disastrous economic and social consequences. Florence became de facto head of her household at nine years old amidst the turmoil of war.[7]

How knowledge can be known

I have briefly described Florence's history here in order to situate the theoretical discussion. The very idea of trying to understand somebody who sees and has experienced the world so radically differently from oneself is itself a perplexing endeavour that also evokes power issues involved with speaking for others and representation (Alcoff, 1991-92; Ruby, 1991; hooks, 1992). Yet, I firmly believe that solutions can only be offered with continued dialogue and critical inquiry. I thus find it necessary to state the extreme caution, yet commitment, with which I advance in these kinds of conversations.[8]

In addition to a number of linguistic anthropologists who have touched on issues of subjective perceptual categories and constructions of reality (von Humboldt, for example in Trabant, 2000; Sapir, 1929; and Whorf, 1956), Alfred Shutz' phenomeno-

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6   Typhoid was, and is still, quite common as a result of insufficient clean water access in the camps.

7   While Florence was a middle child (her younger brother was born to her mother by another man), she was the only girl. Her gender largely defined her duties in her social unit, and in accordance with customary Acholi social organization, was responsible for the cooking, cleaning, and practical well-being of her brothers.

8   As an engaged and applied academic, I believe that any activity departing from thick description, and involving the formulation and application of theory, must eventually be tested in terms of offering real world solutions to real world problems. As this is impossible here, I will proceed with the simple goal of using Bourdieu's 'third way' to help advance questions regarding youth in conflict.

logical ideas have gone a long way in pointing to the vast socially constructed conceptual differences, in addition to linguistic ones, that need to be surmounted in establishing true interpersonal communication and understandings of social realities (see especially *The Phenomenology of the Social World*, 1967). But other anthropologists, including Lévi-Strauss (1962), critique the purely phenomenological approach and state that somebody's conscious representations of experience may not actually aid in a deeper understanding of social reality. Bourdieu himself agrees and states that in addition to understanding subjective behaviour, it is important to consider overarching realities of a given society (one can say the structure) that offer rules which serve to create dissitions that then regulate subjective behaviour.[9] He also says that one cannot simply examine these structures or rules either, as they are static models that do not account for the temporal nature of the human condition (Bourdieu, 2008, p. 8). The importance, he says, is the dialectic activity between these two, offering the idea of *habitus* as a point of convergence of process-oriented phenomenological subjectivity and structure-oriented empirical objectivity.[10] I am most interested, then, in the idea of what is *habitus* through war and displacement, and what dispositions it creates and engenders for a girl like Florence who was born into and grew up in conflict.

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9   I personally believe that Bourdieu's 'third way' is mostly based on phenomenological insight. I do not agree with his statements that phenomenology's goals are simply to describe subjective experience. As evidenced in recent anthropological writing, "what phenomenology stands against is the fetishization of the products of intellectual reflection. Thus, objectivism and subjectivism are equally untenable" (Jackson, 1996, p.1-2).

10   "Habitus is an old philosophical concept, used intermittently by Aristotle (under the term hexis), Thomas Aquinas, Hegel, Weber, Durkheim, Mauss, and Husserl, among others. Bourdieu retrieved it in a 1967 reinterpretation of art historian Erwin Panofsky's analysis of the connection between Scholastic thought and gothic architecture in the medieval era and refined it afterwards, both empirically and theoretically, in each of his major works" (Wacquant, 2006, p. 6).

Bourdieu states that *habitus* creates a system of dynamic dispositions that paradoxically stem from and in turn form perceptual categories. He calls these perceptual categories *generative themes.* The *generative themes* are thus the organizing principles of society. The communication of these organizing principles (in effect, socialization), primarily occurs within the home and then at school (Bourdieu, 2008, p. 87-89), structuring the perception of all subsequent experiences. In Florence's case, however, the backdrop of war, the absence of a stable home or schooling environment and years of displacement in IDP and rebel camps provide many questions as to the perceptual categories and organizing principles through which she understands the world. In addition, her acknowledgement of 'missing' something that would show her how to 'live with others' points to a perceived 'disrupted' or 'atypical' socialization.[11]

Trying to understand the construction of Florence's *habitus* and the dispositions it engenders may be aided by Bourdieu's notion of *doxa. Doxa* is the knowledge that is unspoken, unquestioned and natural in a society. It is that which makes the natural and social world appear as self-evident (Bourdieu, 2008, p. 164). But in the context of long-term war, how is *doxa* affected by violent conflict and displacement? Chris Dolan (2009) has recently made a strong case that the war in Northern Uganda has produced a system of social torture:

The so called 'protected villages' for the internally displaced are primary sites of this process, which I shall call *social torture*, as evidenced in widespread violation, dread, disorientation, dependency, debilitation and humiliation, all of which are tactics

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11   Her consciousness of missing something intangible is not uncommon among youth in conflict. "Their [youth in conflict's] discussions give an impression of a web of relationships hacked through by the violence of war. These breaks in connection include links with the natural world, cultural life, community relationships and friendships—the structures and fabric of a child's life" (Children/Youth As Peacebuilders, 2004, p. 10).

and symptoms typical of torture, but perpetrated on a mass rather than the individual scale (p. 1).

What implications does this have for youth whose naturalized world consists of this torture? What happens when social torture and violence become incorporated into the self-evident part of society, the *doxa*? Sverker Finnström (2008) speaks of how Acholi adults refer to the everyday aspects of war as 'bad surroundings.' What then of youth who have only known 'bad surroundings'?

Bourdieu's idea of *strategy* is most useful here. He speaks of *strategies* as unconscious or conscious actions that seek the "satisfaction of material and symbolic interests and [that are] organized by reference to a determinate set of economic and social conditions" (Bourdieu, 2008, p. 36). Thus, after two decades of war and displacement, if a) cultural conceptual categories or *generative themes* have been disrupted, damaged and altered; b) for survival, the *habitus* of those affected by this prolonged conflict has incorporated the realities of prolonged and protracted war into the socialization of an individual; and c) *doxa* may include high levels of acceptable violence, then what are the strategies that youth use to navigate their complex and dangerous worlds? Perhaps it is by an examination of strategies themselves that the effects of conflict on *doxa*, *generative themes* and, finally, *habitus* can become clearer.

Embodied strategies

Although Florence's life was filled with uncertainty, she employed certain strategies for basic survival. Within her *habitus*, these survival strategies relied predominantly on instinct shaped by *doxa*, and the *generative themes* learned when her mother was still alive, and later from the realities of war in camp and/or rebel life. To be sure, any analysis at this point will be incomplete, but it is fruitful to examine Florence's pregnancy in light of these terms.

Aside from a year and a half with the LRA rebel group, Florence has always lived with her brothers. The war had drastically reduced the size of her kinship network and her *disposition* to care for her brothers still represented a certain social order in her life-world. When her brothers threw her out of the hut in the middle of 2007, Florence found herself without the little social organization that had hitherto shaped her world. She was also without male protection, and was essentially cut off from the socio-economic benefits of kin. Although the socio-economic benefits were not great due to displacement, people had begun to return to their traditional villages due to a ceasefire in hostilities. Given that the Acholi are a patrilineal society where most marriages are patrilocal (Girling, 1960, p. 21), Florence found herself alone in the camp and in a liminal state. She had recently dropped out of school due to repeated bouts of typhoid from unclean water in the camp, and she had only completed Primary 5 and was still not literate. Without an education, and without land to return to, what would she do to survive?

Soon after the split from her brothers, Florence became pregnant. Considering the idea of strategy, one could consider the idea that the pregnancy was elicited because she was shut out of her own family, and the order, rights and benefits that it allowed. Indeed, the pregnancy eventually brought her into the father of her child's kinship network, and she was given a place to live, land to farm and a home to share. Can we not say that Florence's pregnancy might have been her *strategy* within her *habitus*, and in accordance with the *doxa* and *generative themes* of her social world?

Despite the fact that many girls do not end up as fortunate as Florence (healthy and living with the father of her child), girls in her situation do not have diverse and viable options within the economic and social structures of their society after 23 years of war. Like Florence, many young girls' greatest resources are their

own bodies. Although Florence's situation may sound unique, it is far from that in the realities of this long and brutal war.

Of course, to continue with this analysis, in essence applying Bourdieu's 'third way' to an issue such as Florence's pregnancy, further inquiry must be done into Florence's *habitus*: the *generative themes* and *doxa* in Acholiland (Northern Uganda), and how they have been affected by long term conflict. One must situate her *strategies* within the larger societal and historical context by questioning traditional gender roles in Acholi culture, the forms and methods of their communication to Florence (oral tradition, home organization...), and their transformations from violence and displacement (for example changes in intergenerational knowledge exchange and structure of the 'home' from village life, to NGO-infused IDP camp life, to rebel camp life).

Conclusion

All in all, it appears that Bourdieu's 'third way' provides a useful framework for questions regarding youth in long-term conflict zones. Generally, one finds very little 'third way' dialectical analysis of how youth's life choices are made within a world composed of structures and systems radically affected by the temporal effects of violence. Considering that in Northern Uganda, for example, 90% of youth have grown up within Internally Displaced Persons' (IDP) camps, and about 20% of youth experienced abduction and rebel life at some point, insight into the ways in which violence and displacement has shaped social structures and organization, and the ways that youth negotiate between the realities of war on the one hand, and cultural values (or generative themes) on the other, would be useful indeed.

I think Bourdieu's strength can be summarized, in his own terms, as saying that a shift in epistemological inquiry must occur from the opus operatum to the modus operandi (Bourdieu,

2008, p. 72). There is great value is shifting analysis from the work wrought (the products, the experiences of war) to the mode of production itself (or the processes, the practices of survival in war). He is quite right in pointing out that modes of production, or practices, are actually a combination of subjective processes and objective rules or structures that can be examined by looking at the strategies that one uses to negotiate 'reality', broadly conceived. The advantage of incorporating the idea of *habitus* in understanding long-term war is its specific focus on the intersections of macro-level social structures and micro-level agency within the practical actions of an individual and/or society.

Its application to questions regarding youth in conflict could not be more necessary. Since 1980, 28 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have been to war. Today, 40% of the world's 27 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are in African countries, with most of the displacement due to ongoing or recurring fighting (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2009). While there is growing agreement that "…the role of youth is critical in creating long-term stability … and offering protection from future conflicts" (Report of the Secretary General, 2003, p. 371), there is little insight on how to bring youth within local and global networks of social reconstruction. Bourdieu's 'third way' gives me great hope that a close inquiry into the strategies and habitus of youth in societies affected by long-term or recurring conflict can make great strides in being able to find locally relevant solutions to bring youth within and support processes of repair. For, "to explain any social event or pattern, one must inseparably dissect both the social constitution of the agent and the makeup of the particular social universe within which she operates as well as the particular conditions under which they come to encounter and impinge upon each other" (Wacquant, 2006, p. 8). Greater than the sum of answers to any given question, Bourdieu's classic *Outline of a Theory of a Practice* does provide a useful and practical

framework for formulating research questions and design regarding problems of the social world, including ones involving youth and conflict as context.

The main thing is that they are not to be conceptualized so much as ideas, on that level, but as a method. The core of my work lies in the method and a way of thinking. To be more precise, my method is a manner of asking questions rather than just ideas. This, I think is a critical point. (Bourdieu, 1985, quoted in Mahar, 1990, p. 33).
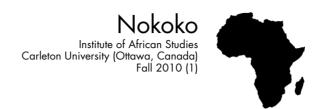
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The South African Reserve Bank and the telling of monetary stories

Elizabeth Cobbett

Stories about the new South Africa—its miraculous and peaceful transition to democracy, its macroeconomic stability, and its strong regional and continental diplomatic role—abound and serve to reinforce a master narrative of a transformed country rising from a violent past and now heading in the right direction. The hosting of the 2010 World Cup FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) is an example of this new South Africa: a successful African state hosting a major international event. Tito Mboweni, former governor of the South African Reserve Bank (SARB), said that preparations for the World Cup came at a time of strong economic growth (Mboweni, 2007). The persistent adherence to prudent macroeconomic policies by the authorities had resulted in the country's solid economic performance in recent years and strengthened its capacity to host the games. This rhetoric portrays South Africa as a new and active par-

ticipant on the world stage, a status aided by the prudent and long-sighted actions of the SARB, which created a stable macro-economic environment. South Africa is an international success story and this achievement is linked to good economic policy.

This article contends that South African political economic leaders are in a struggle to put in place a master narrative of the economy, a supranational identification of common socio-economic problems and goals. The SARB has put forward a dominant narrative–the need to reintegrate the economy into a rapidly changing global financial environment after the long period of apartheid isolation (Van der Merwe, 1997). The last two decades have seen constant efforts by the SARB and by the African National Congress (ANC) government to bring the South African economy in line with global financial requirements. The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) publicly condemns the neoliberal choices that accompany this goal, claiming that these policies mount to "a capitalist onslaught on the working class" (Vavi, 2010b, para.7). For COSATU's general secretary, Zwelinzima Vavi, there is a pressing need "to give a concise class under-standing of post apartheid South Africa and the nature of global capitalism" (Vavi 2010b, para.8). Vavi said that South Africa was in a crisis (Marrian, 2010). Price stability, carried out through the SARB's monetary policy, have to play a subordinate role to national developmental goals of creating jobs and eradicating poverty. If necessary, the government should tax the super rich and use these funds to meet these targets.

The SARB plays a critical role of communicating its macroeconomic policies to the general public and of undermining alternatives, such as COSATU's, that question their decisions. To do this, the Bank tells 'monetary stories.' Central banks are not usually associated with narrative storytelling, or with nation building; yet, recent research demonstrates that monetary policy is an outgrowth of a master narrative and produces, in turn, the context in

which the economy takes place. In a continuation of the FIFA story, the SARB represents itself as a team, one amongst other national teams. In this case, the analogy is with sport: the reserve bank is a team, like the rugby, cricket, and football teams, who are all working towards the common goal of making South Africa strong and internationally relevant:

> We have a busy sporting year ahead of us, with the current cricket world cup games on the go, and the rugby World Cup finals just around the corner. In monetary policy decision making, we rely somewhat on our forecasts for inflation. My current central forecast is that both the cricket and rugby teams are going to do well this year... Allow me to wish Mr White and the Springboks all the best in their endeavours in the rugby World Cup finals in France. We are fully behind you and believe that you have what it takes to bring the cup home. You dare not disappoint the people of South Africa (Mboweni, 2007, p. 5).

Mboweni presents Jake White's role as coach of the rugby team and his own as governor of the Bank, as being similar: they both have to reach targets.

> One common aspect centres around the target that both of us have. For Mr White it is to win matches and tournaments, while in my case it is to ensure that inflation remains within the target range" (Mboweni, 2007, p. 1).

Mboweni uses the excitement of national sports and the feelings of patriotism associated with the successes of national teams to anchor the Bank's goals of inflation targeting.

> Of course, when the world cup finals begin in 2010 we will be keen spectators and supporters of Bafana Bafana [the South African national soccer team], but there is not much we can do to directly impact on the fortunes of the team. I will leave that in the capable hands of Mr Carlos Parreira and his team. We have to keep our eyes on a different ball and a different goal. Through this exciting growth phase that we are experiencing, monetary policy has to ensure that inflation is kept under control (Mboweni, 2007, p. 4).

Master narratives such as these are standard practice in the creation and maintenance of images of states as they promulgate frameworks through which people are led to make meanings of themselves, of their lives, of their identities, and of their social relationships. But these monetary stories by the central bank reflect a pressing need to engrain and settle these parameters into the national imagination of South Africa and what it means to be a citizen of this country. People are implicitly asked to let go of the former vision of a post-apartheid South Africa of social and economic justice that carried the ANC to power, and work and live within a revised economic agenda of free markets, global competition, and individual responsibilities.

COSATU claims that the SARB does not give a damn about what happens to the economy and job creation, and wants the SARB nationalised because it is an asset of our people and not of shareholders (COSATU, June 25, 2009). COSATU publically engages with the SARB and with the minister of finance about policy direction. When the 2010 national budget came out, COSATU said that it had expected monetary policy to be changed to target employment directly and primarily, as pointed out in the election manifesto of the ANC and in the various meetings of the [Tripartite] Alliance (Mail & Guardian, 2010). This is a political debate and this article looks at the *political* role of central banks in a world characterised by decentralised and deregulated finance. The case of South Africa demonstrates well a broader theoretical discussion on the role of central banking in the global financial system.

Literature indicates that central banks have changed their relationship with the general public over the last two decades (Blinder, Ehrmann, Fratzscher, De Haan, & Jansen, 2008; Davies & Green, 2010; Hall, 2008; Holmes, 2009). These institutions have adopted new communication techniques that seek to anchor macroeconomic goals within society. These changes need to be

understood within the broader context of the current global financial order. This is the subject of the first section, which overviews the world financial system and the roles of governance played by credit rating agencies and by central banks. This is followed by analysis of the changes in structural power bought about as central banks are made institutionally independent from political pressure within their countries and freed to follow regulations elaborated by international financial institutions. Following this, focus is given to theory on central bank communication methods and how they 'perform' the economy through the telling of monetary stories. Of particular interest to this article are central bank narratives within countries undergoing extensive social, political, and economic transitions. South Africa experienced a transition to democracy, which put a black-majority government in place. Yet the decision by the South African political and economic elite to direct the economy towards global neoliberal goals radically alters the former vision of a developmental and redistributive state. The ongoing public debates about the choices open to South Africa are at the heart of this struggle to manage the national economy and instil a dominant narrative within the national imagination.

Decentralised and privatised global finance

In the last 150 years three international financial systems have existed: the gold standard, the Bretton Woods Agreement, and free-floating currencies with no set anchor for monetary value (Broz & Frieden, 2001). Financial systems consist of (i) exchange rate arrangements; (ii) capital flows; and (iii) a collection of institutions, rules, and conventions that govern their operations. Each system produces specific relations with domestic financial markets. The gold standard commanded monetary policies of devaluation when the currency exceeded its set value in gold; Bretton Woods permitted more embedded liberal welfare policies for western

countries through international financial institutions, which simultaneously undermined these policies in postcolonial countries; and the shift towards decentralisation and deregulation in 1971 compelled domestic markets to adjust to the effects of mobile capital operating between multiple financial centres worldwide. These centres exert varying degrees of influence over the global production of and access to credit (Germain, 1997).This organisation is characterised by a lack of one nexus of control—even as we recognise the ongoing dominance of Wall Street—rendering the system more complex and requiring us to pay careful attention to institutional arrangements (Porter, 2005). Two constellations of power[1] have emerged as strategic institutional arrangements central to this global governance of finance: credit rating agencies and central banks. These constellations are key infrastructures in the performance of the economy.

1st Constellation of Power: Credit Rating Agencies

Credit and bond rating agencies such as Moody's, Standard & Poor's, and Fitch produce comparative readings of investment opportunities and risks which put value on corporate and public debt worldwide (Sinclair, 2005). Credit rating is a form of institutional financial coordination that promotes the interests of investors through the production of investment data. Rating agencies essentially give value to both public and private debt by making judgements about the risk and the opportunities involved in various investment destinies. Like central banks, rating agencies are a centralising force as they act as a crucial nerve centre in the world financial order, "a nexus of neoliberal control that is exercised through emitting judgements about the economic performance of states and corporations" (Sinclair, 2005, p. 68).

Credit ratings are not imposed on governments but governments seek them as means of attracting capital and of assuring

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1   Taken from Timothy J. Sinclair's book, *The New Masters of Capital* (2005).

financial investors that their money is safe in the country (Sinclair, 2005, p. 10). The South African government invites foreign investors to this 'dream of a business destination,' which combines their ideals: the stability of a developed nation, the opportunity of a vibrant emerging market and a climate that fosters growth. "It's time, [the government reminds investors], to take a closer look at South Africa" (South Africa Info, 2010, para.1). Trevor Manuel, former minister of finance, states that in South Africa "we've taken some very tough decisions to provide a climate for certainty. The Constitution, the legal framework, the macroeconomic framework, all add up to certainty and predictability. South Africa has created a climate that investors need" (South Africa Info, 2010). These 'very tough decisions' resonate well with rating agencies; Standard & Poor's set South Africa's long term rating at BBB+ and foreign currency issue rating at A+ (South Africa Info, 2009). The National Treasury points out that "the affirmation of South Africa's rating reflects confidence in our credit position and future policy direction, thanks in large part to a record of prudent execution of macroeconomic policies" (South Africa Info, 2009, para. 3). The country's financial systems are presented as being sophisticated and supported by robust banking regulations that rank among the top 10 globally (South Africa Info, 2008).

These ratings reflect investor opinion on national policies as is made clear in the following excerpt from Moody's November 2009 reading of South Africa:

> There is also increased risk that easier fiscal policy, with emphasis on the social safety net, will become entrenched due to the greater influence of the labor unions in government. Moreover, the growing impatience of the population for the government to deliver on promises of improved social services and housing, jobs, and better education, among other demands, could make it difficult to rein in spending increases as currently envisioned over the medium to long term (Cailleteau, Lindow, & Orchard, personal communication, April 15, 2010).

Social and political disturbances or unrest play against favourable credit ratings but they are offset by the state's stable management of the macroeconomic environment through central bank management. Moody's goes on to say that:

> The economy's growth potential is likely to shrink in a less supportive global environment...this would mean that pressure from within the government alliance for unaffordable and distortive fiscal and monetary policies will need to be resisted, despite frustration with the slow pace of progress on the jobs front (Cailleteau, Lindow, & Orchard, personal communication, April 15, 2010).

Here we clearly see Moody's argument against any accommodation by the ANC of left-wing members of the government's Tripartite Alliance:[2] the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). The relevance of looking at credit rating agencies when studying central bank action resides in understanding the degree to which banks need to obtain good ratings from the agencies for national and subnational debts. Agencies give good ratings when the monetary policies put in place by central banks reduce risk for foreign investors and when the political climate is stable, that is, when it will not threaten the rates of profit or the possibility of withdrawing money from the country once the investment is over. Central banks therefore undertake to influence and direct markets and public behaviour in line with these rating agencies' standards and goals.

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2   When political organizations were unbanned by the apartheid government in 1990, the African National Congress, South African Communist Party and COSATU agreed to work together as a Revolutionary Alliance (Tripartite Alliance). The 6th National Congress (of COSATU in 1997) resolved that the Alliance remains the only vehicle capable of bringing about fundamental transformation in South Africa (COSATU, 2009).

2nd Constellation of Power: Central Banks

A network of central banks links populations, states, national economies, and global financial arrangements within a transnational regime of financial governance. The ultimate objective of central banks has always been monetary and financial stability (White, 2005). This stability is assured through regulatory standards that are internationally negotiated and domestically applied. This goal has become more difficult to achieve as global capital moves freely across borders. The paradox is that the decentralised and deregulated global financial system depends increasingly on the regulated and centralised domestic control of central banks. National economies are stabilised through monetary policy and act as an anchor of value for global capital.

The power of central banks to implement their vision through national policies resides in historic relations of collaboration and coordination between central banks, dating from around 1930 when the Bank of International Settlements (BIS) was founded. The BIS is the world's oldest international financial institution and remains the principal locus for central bank cooperation and governance. Helleiner (1994) identifies this cooperation as a movement towards what Peter Haas (1992) calls an *epistemic community*, or networks of knowledge-based experts. Haas notes that epistemic communities play a key role in articulating complex problems and in helping states identify their interests, frame public debates, and put forward specific policy solutions. Importantly, epistemic communities have their own vision of reality built through a historic consent on how the world works.

This knowledge-based network, known as the Basel Community (White, 2005), has developed a vision of 'correct' beliefs through iteration of beliefs, practice, and experience. This vision is strengthened through the common education received by central bank governors and senior members of the banks. Interbank cooperation is fostered through the hundreds of meetings that

take place every year involving central bank governors and specialists (communication experts, auditors, security experts, economists, etc.). This has resulted in convergence to a mutually accepted interpretation of the world and identification of the most appropriate solutions to financial problems. It is this shared understanding of reality that shores up the current global financial order.

Central banks therefore 'belong' both to their individual countries, where they are at the centre of national monetary and fiscal control, and to this international community of central bankers, which promotes and supports the implementation of their shared vision of the global political economy. The BIS secretariat explains it as follows: the central bank, an organisation with a public mandate, belongs to the government in a broad sense—as do the legislative, executive, and judicial branches—and acts in interplay with other governmental bodies within a country's governance structure (Oritani, 2010). Yet, central bank independence from government and political pressure is now considered a requisite element of global financial architecture. Central banks and governments clearly recognise their interdependence in the national arenas but these patterns of coordination between central banks and governments have changed with the demise of the Bretton Woods financial order. The fiat money system that succeeded the breakdown of Bretton Woods saw wide-reaching institutional reforms as central banks moved to assure financial stability worldwide and price stability domestically. Central bank independence was prompted by previous failures of anti-inflation policies and a belief that independence from political pressure would help secure lower inflation in the future (Crowe & Meade, 2007). The belief is that bank independence reduces the possibility of policy swings that can arise when monetary policies are determined by political parties representing special interests (Oritani, 2010, p. 41).

The 1990s saw a wave of new legislation securing this legislative independence in new banking acts and revised constitutions. The Maastricht Treaty and the creation of the European Union clearly set out the legal independence of the new European Central Bank (ECB) and its members, the central banks of Europe. This independence from direct political pressure is guaranteed by Article 107 of the Treaty, which reads that "no member of the ECB shall seek or take instructions from Community institutions or bodies, from any government of a Member State or from any other body" (European Union, 1992, p. 17). This wave of legal changes in central banking has been particularly noted in developing and emerging market economies (Crowe & Meade, 2007). Countries of the former Soviet Union, for example, saw their constitutional laws rewritten and a new independence given to their central banks. African countries have generally moved to more market-based financial systems with greater autonomy and accountability applying to central banks (Mboweni, 2004). The transition to a post-apartheid state and the rewriting of the South African Constitution were perfect opportunities to grant the SARB legal independence. Subsection 224 (2) of the South African Constitution states that "the South African Reserve Bank, in pursuit of its primary object, must perform its functions independently and without fear, favour or prejudice…" (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, p. 1331 [28]). The SARB's monetary policy committee (MPC) clarifies that it makes monetary policy decisions independently of its shareholders and the government. Constituted by the executive directors (the governor and the three deputy governors) and the professional members of the SARB, the MPC has the mandate to elaborate and implement the monetary policy framework for the country. Although the Reserve Bank has complete instrumental independence, Mboweni adds that it is of course accountable to the citizens of South Africa (Mboweni, 2004). Accountability is indeed a key issue. The Constitution

stipulates that the Reserve Bank must be in regular consultation with the cabinet member responsible for national financial matters (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, p. 1331[28]). Apart from this condition of regular meetings with the minister of finance, there is little legal provision to make the Bank responsive to political demands and citizen discontent about economic policy. The Constitution acts, rather, as a shield that protects the committee from 'external' pressure.

Discourses of power: Central banks as narrators

Literature indicates that central banks have changed their relationships with financial markets and the general public over the last two decades through the development and use of new communication techniques (Blinder et al., 2008; Hall, 2008; Holmes, 2009). Before the 1990s, central banks were shrouded in mystery—it was believed that they should be—and decisions were made behind closed doors (Blinder et al., 2008). Blinder et al. (2008, p. 25) point out that central banks are now making their decisions known, widely available, and transparent in the belief that if their actions are more predictable to markets, markets will react in expected ways to monetary policy. This communication can be understood broadly as the provision of information by the central bank to the public regarding such matters as the objectives of monetary policy, the monetary policy strategy, the economic outlook, and the outlook for future policy decisions (p. 10). For example, the making public of the minutes from a central bank's monetary policy committee meetings along with the release of a central bank's inflation reports appear to move financial markets significantly in the direction desired by the banks (p. 34). Communication strategies are considered essential elements, for instance, in anchoring the long-run inflation levels by announcing a numerical inflation target and making it widely known to the gen-

eral public. The markets and the public integrate this information and adapt their behaviour in reaction to anticipated changes, thereby enacting the desired result. These changes have been referred to as a communication revolution and are powerful components of every central bank's toolkit.

Blinder et al. (2008, p. 5) point out that no consensus has emerged on what communication policies constitute best practice for central banks. Practices, in fact, differ substantially and are evolving continuously according to state histories, practices, and internal logics. This echoes current literature on the state (Hansen & Stepputat, 2001), which points out that while there are commonalities in state, governance, and the language of 'stateness', no institution, policy paper, or universalised regime is 'the same' everywhere. Keeping in mind this caveat, it remains possible to identify common analytical frameworks within which emerging central banking practices are embedded. Using the analytical framework of cultural anthropology, Douglas Holmes (2009, p. 383) builds on Blinder et al.'s observations of central bank communication by linking them to John Maynard Keynes. According to Holmes, Keynes identified the power of central banks in his *A Tract on Monetary Reform* (Keynes, 1923). Keynes saw these financial institutions as possessing great regulatory power, pacing the activity in the economy as a whole, as virtually all transactions are in one way or another contingent on financial mediation (Holmes, 2009, p. 388). This power is subject to intense public scrutiny and to very little formal accountability (p. 387). The challenge, Keynes identified, was to tame the 'animal spirits' of economic actors when they act with little regard for monetary authorities or not in the interest of the larger group. Expectations needed to be disciplined with persuasive narratives and Keynes was concerned with developing a language for money and monetary policy (p. 390). The goal was to find a language that could

make economic phenomena into meaningful public discourse and thereby, into instruments of intervention (p. 391).

Working within Keynes' intellectual tradition, Holmes applies Michel Callon's (2007) insights on performative theory—that economic theory is the means for creating economic phenomena and regulating economic behaviour rather than being merely the tools for representing or analysing them—to Blinder et al.'s research on central bank communication strategies. Callon's performative thesis argues that words perform the decisive function of creating countless contexts that frame data series, statistical measures, and econometric projections. Economic theory is therefore the means for creating economic phenomena and regulating economic behaviour rather than a simple tool for representing the economy as object. Building on this theory, Holmes introduces the notion of an *"economy of words"* as the means and medium through which this kind of creative labour is articulated and enacted (2009, p. 384; italics added).

An *economy of words* is the process by which central banks linguistically model economic phenomena operating at the limits of calculation and measurement. In other words, central banks name and render observable economic phenomena that are largely outside of common knowledge and thus, make known complex economic phenomena through simplified economic parameters. Well known symbols, such as interest rates and inflation targets, act as parameters for general social behaviour while a wider range of more complex monetary and financial tools create the broader context for the operations of financial markets. The underlying principle is that successful monetary policy is not so much a matter of control of monetary tools, such as overnight interest rates, but rather about managing expectations and future action through communication. Towards the end of the last century, central bankers came to adopt an experimental ethos of communication performed in situ (Holmes, 2009, p. 386). Initiated by the Re-

serve Bank of New Zealand, central banks worked out the means for modelling linguistically and communicatively economic phenomena (p. 411). Narratives, or monetary stories, informed by a continuous stream of data and analyses, articulated in a measured and consistent fashion, became the modus operandi for central banks (p. 385). This practice represents the most decisive and convincing demonstration of Callon's performative theory (p. 383). Words create the economy simultaneously as a communicative field and as an empirical fact. What does the central bank's communication achieve? Holmes claims that the answer is both simple and profound (p. 403). The public's expectations will cleave over time to monetary policy targets, such as permissible levels of inflation, which are integrated in their future behaviour. People, in other words, will adapt their expectations and actions to fit into the parameters set out by the central bank, such as proposed changes in the rate of interest.

Monetary storytelling is occurring actively in contemporary South Africa. As a frequent visitor to South Africa over the last few years, I am constantly surprised by the weighty and constant presence of the central bank in the media. The central bank is a very eloquent, visible, and particularly powerful actor in public debates and is foremost in the creation and maintenance of the country's macroeconomic narrative. My impression is that the Reserve Bank's governor has as much, if not more, influence than the governing party.

South Africa

The historical trajectory of South Africa's political economy has been largely determined by its role as world gold producer and its place within the British Empire. The South African Reserve Bank has been closely tied to the western international financial system for nearly one hundred years. This was so even during the

years of apartheid when the country became member of the Bank of International Settlements in 1971 and the central bank financed the apartheid government's debt on foreign markets. The establishment of the South African central bank needs to be understood within this broader context of historic global financial ties.

A hundred years ago, domestic monetary policy was shaped by imperial banks operating in South Africa under the directions of the Bank of England (Ally, 1994). This gradually changed as Britain found it increasingly difficult to compete with the other leading European industrial countries and the United States' rising financial power during the inter-war period of 1919 to 1939. Britain's monopolistic relationship with gold producers in South Africa had been central to maintaining its former position at the centre of the global financial system. But Jan Smuts, prime minister of the Union of South Africa, had come under criticism from Nationalists for allowing imperial Britain's interests to override South Africa's independence, especially in regards to local currency requirements, dependent on overseas production in England (p. 76). At the same time, the Chamber of Mines pushed to have more control over the gold refinery process and wanted to install a refinery within South Africa instead of shipping all its unprocessed metal to London where it fell under the control of the Bank of England. The Chamber of Mines argued that a local refinery would lead to important savings for the industry and to greater control as to whom to sell the gold to. Of interest to the Chamber was the interest shown by the United States of America who saw an advantage in breaking the British monopoly and dealing directly with South African gold suppliers. Political opposition in South Africa against the country's subordination to Britain's imperial interests finally created enough leverage to establish two key national institutions: a gold refinery and a national mint (p. 84). These moves to independence were facilitated by the challen-

ging economic context facing post-war Britain and its limited resources in managing these crises.

Calls for a South African central bank were buttressed in the aftermath of the First World War when the British government unpegged its currency to the US dollar by coming off the gold standard and letting the British pound float. As the South African pound was linked to the sterling, it was also devalued against the dollar, plunging the country into recession. Merit was seen in breaking with the British sterling and establishing new banking norms and a state bank within the country. While this goal was at the fore of nationalist sentiment, the creation of a South African central bank was actually made possible by the Bank of England's decision to encourage the spread of central banks worldwide (Ally, 1994, p. 88). This decision built on a political economic re-evaluation of Britain's relative global strength and its place and power within the changing economic and financial world context. Britain's informal financial system, developed under its global dominance, had shrunk as it faced the economic consequences of the war and increasing rivalry from New York as financial centre (p. 89). The Bank of England saw the establishment of national central banks as a means of pursuing its influence over global finance. It reasoned that in the changed environment a more formal international monetary system would separate national political pressures and governments' interests from financial control and monetary stability, and help secure direct British influence through a worldwide banking system. Britain had consistently endeavoured to separate the interests of the mining industry from that of the Union government, wishing to secure its privileged relationship to gold producers (p. 81). The national 1919 Gold Conference of mining companies (which met to address the problems encountered with the marketing of South Africa's gold production) pinpointed the need to introduce a uniform bank act that could protect against the inflation of the currency, maintain

the price of gold, and offer greater degree of national power (p. 90). A Select Committee of Parliament followed on the Gold Conference's recommendation to establish a central bank.

Jan Smuts invited Henry Strakosch, managing director of the Union Corporation—a holding company with extensive foreign investments in South African gold mines—to the country for consultation and advice on improving the national banking system (Ally, 1994, p. 87). Strakosch, in collaboration with the Union Corporation's treasury, drafted the original Bill of the Currency and Banking Act of 1920, ensuring that management of the future reserve bank would not be under government control; rather he proposed setting up a central bank with private funds obtained through shareholders (p. 90). The independence of the central bank from the governing party was unusual at the time of its establishment; it is more in line with current global reforms that separate democratically-elected representatives from monetary control. The South African Reserve Bank opened its doors for business for the first time on 30 June 1921. The Bank was a paradoxical mix of British imperial interests with nationalist goals of greater independence from British rule and the identification of the need of a central bank under the control of local government.

This mix of powerful mining companies, international finance, and the central bank continue to shape the political economy of the country. Habib and Padayachee (2000) note that the 1989 Bank Act renewed historic alliances between the state and powerful business as the state prepared for its transition to liberal democracy. A group of powerful conglomerates involved in mining, finance, and energy worked to ensure that the new black-majority government would create a macroeconomic context that would facilitate the globalisation of their activities (p. 260). A pivotal aspect of this move to secure the desired macroeconomic context was to grant greater autonomy to the SARB (p. 248). Enshrined in the 1996 Constitution, the political economic structure

witnessed a return to the original vision of independent global financial power within the domestic economy. This arrangement between the SARB, the government and the business elite under-pins the political economy of contemporary South Africa.

Monetary stories in the New South Africa

Sixteen years after the first democratic elections there has been little change in the overall level of income inequality. South Africa has overtaken Brazil as the world's most unequal country as its Gini coefficient index—which shows the level of income in-equality—increases to 0.679 (Craven, 2009). In spite of this dis-mal record, the SARB continues to move the country towards full compliance with the global neoliberal regime of deregulated fi-nance. This means working to orientate human expectations and actions towards the desired neoliberal macroeconomic goals of privatised public services, greater individual responsibility for human welfare, and new opportunities for financial investment. While the ANC is fully supportive of this orientation, social groups and trade unions are voicing their opposition. Social movements are holding the government to its former electoral promises of social and economic redress for the poor majority. This tension is manifest within the Tripartite Alliance government where COSATU publicly opposes the central bank's conservative monetary policies.[3]

The following excerpts from an article in the *Mail & Guardian* newspaper, published February 2010 (Mapenzauswa, 2010), make evident this public debate over monetary policy, poverty, and economic growth between COSATU, on the one hand, and

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3   This tension extends equally to the South African Communist Party (SACP) who criticizes some of the ANC's policies as anti-poor; however the focus here is on COSATU who engages publicly and regularly with the ANC executive and the SARB on issues of monetary policy.

the SARB and Minster of Finance Pravin Gordhan, on the other hand:

> The ANC's labour union and communist allies want an overhaul of monetary policy, saying the central bank has pursued its inflation targeting mandate blindly at the expense of economic growth. (2010, para. 4).

> Unions have proposed that the 3% to 6% target for consumer inflation be scrapped or widened, or that the central bank's mandate to be broadened to take into account economic growth and job creation (2010, para. 6).

> I wish to confirm that the Reserve Bank will continue to pursue a target for CPI inflation of 3% to 6%, Gordhan [the minister of finance] said (2010, para. 7).

> Ongoing assessment, discussion and commentary about our monetary policy by analysts, interested members of the public, interest groups and the broader research community is constructive for the emergence of a social consensus in this area over the longer-term, he [Gordhan] said (2010, para. 9).

> In apparent reference to calls [by COSATU] to nationalise the central bank, Gordhan reiterated that South Africa's Constitution stipulated the institution should pursue its mandate independently and without fear, favour or prejudice (2010, para. 10).

> The role of the Reserve Bank in maintaining financial stability would also be enhanced, Gordhan said. He warned that South Africa's present inflation levels were higher than those of its trading partners, lowering its competitiveness (2010, para. 14).

The SARB has the task of grounding its economic narrative in a country undergoing significant social and political transformations and upheavals. In contrast to well established liberal market democracies where the distribution of power within the political economic structure is largely accepted by the population, the SARB needs to make sure that its narrative is seen as unquestionable, as the undisputed truth, regardless of deepening tensions

between private financial interests, on the one hand, and escalating poverty and pockets of exclusion, on the other.

When the new governor of the central bank, Gill Marcus, took up her functions in November 2009, Pravin Gordhan sent her a letter in which he reiterated that credible monetary policy holds a central place in South Africa as it endeavours to attract foreign investment and stimulate growth (Gordhan, 2010, p. 2). In this letter, he emphasised that communication with the public needed to be improved so as to increase the effectiveness of the central bank in achieving its mandate of low inflation and greater economic growth. This letter is an effective media communication that confirms the direction of the SARB in line with the broader global financial regime and the ideological links between the ANC and the SARB as the change in the governor of the central bank was carried out. The letter aimed at reassuring financial markets that the transition to the new governor of the central bank would not interrupt the same conservative monetary policies in place since the ANC came to power. It was also a message to social actors, such as labour unions and grassroots activists, that there would be no change in monetary policy and no question of nationalising the central bank. COSATU National Spokesperson Patrick Craven asks:

> The Freedom Charter called for the people to share in the country's wealth. How can we achieve that when the country's most important financial institution is not under any democratic control by, or accountability to, the people (Craven, 2010, para. 4).

This idea was qualified as "nuts" by Governor Marcus (South African Press Association, 2010, para. 1). These calls to nationalise the SARB have been accompanied by simultaneous demands by private shareholders of the Bank to obtain a market value for their shares in the event of nationalisation. The present 2010

South African Reserve Bank Amendment Bill aims to confront both challenges to the SARB's independence.[4]

These debates are examples of frequent ideological confrontations in the public arena between left-wing members—the SACP and COSATU of the Tripartite Alliance Government—and the minister of finance, and the SARB. What the Reserve Bank and the ANC national government are endeavouring is to effectively sideline calls from the left-wing members for nationalisation of the central bank, for an easing in monetary policy towards lower rates of interest, for less Bank preoccupation with the inflation target of three to six percent, and for greater emphasis on expansionary macroeconomic policies and job creation. Yet ANC support of the central bank's economic policies appears to stand in direct contradiction to declarations made by President Jacob Zuma:

> The ANC, a disciplined force of the left, accepted the electoral mandate which came primarily from the workers and the poor, with a commitment to take further the struggle for a better life for all. The ANC must now use its victory and control of State power to improve the quality of life of the poor and marginalised (Zuma, 2009, para. 10-11).

There is a division in the economic discourse used by the Minister of Finance and the SARB, on the one hand, and the revolutionary rhetoric of the ANC executive, on the other. This can be explained by a desire to maintain the image of social and economic justice being performed through the president and his office. The president brings together the nation; he is the concerned father that listens to all the problems. Debates are thus carried out between the central bank, the finance minister, and the members of the Tripartite Alliance, leaving the president aside.

These mediatised debates are a double edged sword; I believe that they actually help anchor the central bank's goals in import-

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4   The Bill aims to stop shareholders from circumventing the current act's limitation on shares per shareholder to 10 000 and to define clear criteria for the disqualification of persons from serving on the board of the Reserve Bank.

ant ways. COSATU and the SACP are historic and powerful social bodies that act as social and political media rods for the SARB's narrative. Being called upon by these actors to justify its monetary policies, the SARB is brought into the public realm and the rather obscure institution is made known and 'real' through exchange with these well known social actors. By engaging with them, the central bank becomes more visible to the wider public and its *economy of words* is disseminated. What's more, these debates permit the SARB to establish more direct and influential links with the country's citizens as COSATU and SACP directly inform their members—workers, social groups, and activists—of the Reserve Bank, its role, and its economic goals. Holmes' (2009) work on the Reserve Bank of New Zealand points to these innovations used by central banks for securing the implementation of monetary policy. His hypothesis is that central bank communications *are* the instruments of policy themselves, *they* make the economy. In this sense, South Africa's central bank is creating the context, or the dominant narrative, of the national economy through ongoing debates with COSATU. The current political economic power structures ensure that there is no real threat to the SARB's independence—neither to its vision nor to its power to implement policies. This explains the willingness with which it engages in these public dialogues. In so doing, its vision is actually embedded within the public realm and validated. The dialogues, in other words, create this particular *economy of words*.

The SARB uses special occasions for storytelling that permit it to tie its policies to powerful national symbols. In a remarkable speech given in 2009 at the Annual Steve Biko Memorial Lecture, Mboweni, then governor of the South African Reserve Bank, stated:

> To break a bit with tradition, the thrust of my address tonight will be on economic issues. In particular, I will share a few observations and thoughts on selected macroeconomic developments in South Africa in

the past 15 years. From 9 November 2009 I will no longer be allowed to comment on monetary policy. As the outgoing governor, however, I will take advantage of this platform to remind you of a few truths, one being that no central bank worth its salt can ever tolerate high inflation. Price stability may not be a sufficient condition but I maintain that it is a necessary condition for a solid foundation for sustainable growth and prosperity (Mboweni, 2009, p. 2).

I would like to believe that Steve Biko would have been gratified by the fairly contained pace of inflation over the past 15 years, knowing the dire consequences of inflation for the poor—those who are usually least able to hedge against inflation—in particular. Since 1994 average headline inflation has amounted to approximately 6.5 per cent per annum. Over the preceding 15 years, 1979 to 1994, it had averaged almost 14 per cent per annum. Inflation has been uneven over the period, though, induced typically by significant changes in key exogenous drivers of inflation, such as oil prices (p. 3).

Secondly, the recent upsurge in strike action has led to some commentators describing the wave as a "winter of discontent". In this regard, I would like to comment on some worrying trends in the settlements reached. Wage settlements above the projected rate of inflation and in excess of productivity gains tend to undermine the fight against high inflation. They lead to labour cost increases way above those of trade competitors and, therefore, loss of competitiveness (p. 3)

It is astonishing that the central bank is invited to address the public at this particular event. The fact that the SARB is there speaks in all probability to its desire to make these kinds of links between its policies and national symbols. Mboweni's discourse itself is striking for several reasons. Firstly, it clearly demonstrates the way the central bank produces a narrative of the economy using influential national images linked to the history of South Africa and its struggle against apartheid. To link Biko, known for his elaboration of a pro-black radical doctrine and his death at the hands of state interrogators, to inflation targeting seems to be a wild attempt to validate divisive economic policies with a man who would almost certainly have contested these very policies. COSATU's position on the SARB's conservative monetary policy

framework is more indicative of a position that Biko would have likely taken, that of focusing on the developmental needs of the country where the unemployment rate and inequality gap are amongst the highest in the world (Dlamini, 2010). Yet, the central bank attempts to authenticate its controversial monetary policy by making this powerful historic personage speak in its favour.

Secondly, this reference to Biko transforms the failure of state development in terms of poverty reduction and service provision into a narrative of policy success and state accomplishment. The central bank congratulates itself for having obtained better macro-economic goals than those achieved under the previous apartheid administration. Since 1994 average headline inflation has amounted to approximately 6.5 percent per annum. Over the preceding 15 years, 1979 to 1994, inflation had averaged almost 14 per cent per annum (Mboweni, 2009). The SARB uses the dimension of time—before the transition of 1994 and the current post-apartheid period—to shed a favourable light on its current performance. It portrays the current South Africa state as putting good governance practices in place and respecting its macroeconomic engagements, in a much better way than had done the apartheid state. This is ironic because the Reserve Bank was an integral part of the South African apartheid state's political economic structure. But by using this difference in time, it differentiates itself from the apartheid past, showing that the country has turned a new economic page with satisfactory results.

Thirdly, Biko's well known line, 'that the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed', (Biko & Stubbs, 1978) resonates strangely with the central bank's desire to direct human economic action through communication. Biko's link between the ideational and material life takes on a new twist as the governor calls upon Biko's persona to validate the Reserve Bank's macroeconomic policies. The man who is being called upon to speak on behalf of contested policies is the very person

who spoke about the need for the oppressed to free their minds from political manipulation. In other words, Biko is being used to authenticate monetary policies that depend on reflexive subjects. Central banks recognise that the ideational—influencing and directing people's ideas and expectations about their socio-economic lives—will create the desired national economy through managing human expectations and their action.

Conclusion

The SARB and the ANC executive have a vision of South Africa as a full member of the deregulated and decentralized global financial order. These political economic leaders are putting in place a master narrative of the economy; a supranational identification of the country as an economic power participating in a globalised world. There is social tension as the visions associated with the overthrow of colonial power and the election of the first black-majority government are put aside by the state to ensure compliance with the interests of capital and the global financial system. People are implicitly asked to let go of the former vision of a post-apartheid South Africa of social and economic justice and to work and live within a revised economic agenda of free markets, global competition, and liberal freedoms and individual responsibilities. This direction undermines the former vision of social and economic justice that accompanied the ANC to power. Social groups contest this route. In particular, COSATU challenges the central bank on its monetary policies and calls the ANC executive to respect its former commitments of improving lives through shared wealth and social justice. The national strike of public workers, carried out by COSATU just a month before the ANC's national general council (NGC) in 2010, is an indication of the deepening rift within the government Tripartite Alliance. The strike demonstrates the state's difficulty in outlaying a more uni-

fied vision of the political economy of the country. COSATU is calling for a wage increase for the public sector workers and the SARB responds that wage increases in the public sector are inflationary (Donnelly, 2010). This tension has not been resolved and South Africa is at a defining moment in this struggle for a master narrative of the national economy and, consequently, of society.

The challenge facing the SARB is the struggle to *settle* the revised economic orientation away from one of redistribution to one based on neoliberal principles. In other words, the SARB needs to get South Africans on board as it moves the national economy and the human action that makes it, towards global financial and economic norms and standards. This challenge is met, amongst other methods, through the role that the SARB has adopted in defining the parameters of acceptable economic action within the country. These socio-economic boundaries are drawn by using and adapting new communication techniques developed by central banks over the last two decades. Words create the economy as a communicative field and as an empirical fact (Holmes, 2009). In this context, the language of macroeconomic fundamentals adopted by the SARB and the ANC government is presented as the defining order of permissible economic and social action for people living in South Africa. Monetary storytelling reinforces the message that the SARB's policies are part of the country—what being South African is all about—and, therefore, the definitive bench mark for economic choices. The SARB reinforces these stories by linking them to powerful national symbols such as sport and historic figures of apartheid resistance. In this context, the question is how will the SARB make sure that domestic inflation is maintained within the target range of three to six percent and that foreign investors are not scared off by political unrest. The 'political unrest' also draws on the FIFA success to point out that "The World Cup has demonstrated to the working class and the poor that indeed the state has the fiscal muscle

to spend on developmental projects. We have seen what is possible with unity and decisive leadership. When we demand better education, healthcare, jobs and housing we will now have the World Cup experience as a reference point" (Vavi, 2010a).
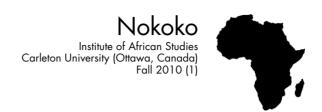
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The neoliberal turn in the SADC

Regional integration and disintegration

Jessica Evans

The SADC vision is one of a common future, within a regional community that will ensure economic well-being, improvement of the standards of living and quality of life, freedom and social justice, peace and security for the peoples of Southern Africa. This shared vision is anchored on the common values and principles and the historical and cultural affinities that exist amongst the peoples of Southern Africa. (SADC, 2010, p. 1)

On August 17, 1992, in Windhoek, Namibia, the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) was transformed into the Southern African Development Community (SADCC; Lee, 2003, p. 47). The transformation of the SADCC into the SADC was a watershed mark in the geopolitical dynamics of the region, reflecting a closing to the era of Cold War proxy wars on the continent, an anticipated end to the Total Strategy[1]

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[1]   The Total Strategy refers to the South African apartheid state's attempt to defend its racially inscribed capitalism through an ideological positioning

and apartheid state in South Africa, and optimism about the potential of regional cooperation and development among the newly liberated states. With these geopolitical transformations at hand, the SADCC, which had emphasized regional economic cooperation and coordination with a primary goal of reducing dependence on apartheid South Africa, would inevitably have to undergo some critical structural and policy changes due to the inclusion of a democratic South Africa. Transformed into the SADC, this new regional body ostensibly reflected a change in South Africa's posture towards the region, anticipated by Nelson Mandela's early awareness of "the need for peaceful cooperation for *mutual benefit* if the region's future is to be secure" (Simon, 1998, p. 4). According to Hentz, the new SADC programme was a prototype of developmental regional integration and cooperation (2005, p. 33). Yet, it would appear that, to date, there have been very few meaningful projects and policies developed within the SADC that have actually promoted "mutual benefit" and "development" (see for example Taylor, 2003 and Tsie, 1996). Rather, the SADC has increasingly embraced a free market approach to integration along the lines of neoliberal orthodoxy, exacerbating the existing asymmetries and inequalities. Thus, the developmental content of the SADC has fallen into disrepute, leading critics to the conclusion that it is developmental only in name (Hentz, 2005, p. 33).

The shift within SADC's priorities and ideological posture must be understood with reference to the coinciding shifts in the global economy following the end of the Cold War and the consolidation of neoliberalism as a global agenda, and the regional

against the "total onslaught" of Marxism among liberated African states. This was to be achieved through a stick-and-carrot combination of diplomacy and ideological legitimation via national-level compromises with key Black constituents and regional "cooperation" (which largely would have amounted to increasing regional economic dependence on South Africa), as well as heavily militarized tactics of destabilization against liberated Black-African states (Davies & O'Meara, 1984).

geopolitical transformations that followed the end of South Africa's apartheid state. Shifts in the composition and tools of the global political economy were instrumental in transforming the formal agenda of regionalism in Southern Africa. In turn, the adoption of neoliberal orthodoxy has engendered multiple microregional processes that have complicated the prospects for the successful consolidation of a regional imaginary. An examination of the competing regional processes instigated by the neoliberal turn is, therefore, instructive in identifying the disjuncture and contradiction that have become endemic to SADC regionalism.

In this article, I argue that the exogenous pressures of the global political economy, which have shaped contemporary SADC regionalism, have produced informal, bottom-up regional forces, which, when left outside of the formal regional consideration (either intentionally or unintentionally), have the potential of fostering regional disintegration rather than integration.

I use a case study of the role of informal cross-border traders and circular migrants in the SADC, with particular focus on the response of South Africa as a regional centre for informal cross-border trade and circular migration. On the one hand, as a result of the region-wide adoption of neoliberal orthodoxy through international influence and structural adjustment programs in many states, a hollowing and weakening of the state's ability to provide for its population, massive public sector retrenchment, wage *freezes*, and unemployment have ensued, causing a substantial reliance of the region's population on informal sector livelihood strategies (Tripp, 2001, p. 1). Increasingly, these informal sector livelihood strategies are premised on informal cross-border trade and migration, particularly into South Africa, a practice that has been facilitated by the opening of borders to formal trade and capital flows under neoliberal restructuring (Williams & Carr, 2006, p. 3). In response to increasing in-migration, South Africa

has sought to stem the cross-border movement of informal traders through a reassertion of state sovereignty and the border with heavy policing measures and an exclusionary migration policy (Pederby, 2001, p. 16). The reassertion of the border has had the effect of freezing regional relations and detracting from the construction of regional identity by further entrenching notions of difference and otherness, contributing to rising levels of xenophobia (p. 29). This, then, would seem to run counter to the self-proclaimed logic of regionalism by the SADC and contradict South Africa's supposed commitment to and support of integration as a means of promoting equitable regional development and peace, as repeatedly and publicly proclaimed by former President Thabo Mbeki (Taylor, 2003, p. 311). My intent in this article is to use South Africa as a case study to highlight the problem of neoliberal regionalism in the SADC. The SADC's movement to a neoliberal integration policy has created a set of informal microregional processes which, if met by an unresponsive or restrictive policy environment, have the potential of further fragmenting the region and detracting from the overall goals of peace, growth, and equitable development.

The remainder of this article is organized as follows. First, I situate the current problem, as it pertains to regionalism, within the tradition of the new regionalism(s) approach (NRA). The NRA school of thought is derivative of critical international political economy, and as such emphasizes the importance of situating regionalism(s) as a factor in the overall structure and forces at play in the international political economy. This is particularly useful for the argument being advanced here, as the very problems of SADC regionalism being addressed are in dialogue with the larger processes of global restructuring under neoliberal hegemony.

Second, I demonstrate how shifts in the structure and character of the international political economy have influenced a con-

comitant shift in SADC regionalism, namely that of a shift to neoliberal orthodoxy. To this end, I examine how issues of structure and agency have contributed to this shift.

Third, I review how this shift in agenda has impacted SADC regionalism with reference to an increase in informal cross-border trade and migration as an emergent dimension of informal micro-regionalism(s) and the subsequent reaction of South Africa in evoking an exclusionary statist stance on migration policies, thus hampering and fragmenting regional relations (Mulaudzi, 2009, p. 49).

Last, I demonstrate how these processes are products of and responses to global neoliberal hegemony, so as to reveal the propensity towards disintegration that the SADC faces.

The NRA and Critical International Political Economy

Traditional integration theory began from an ontological presumption of states as the fixed locus of power in the international system, negotiating between themselves optimal economic interstate relations. Within the context of the Cold War and assumptions of global structural fixity, regionalism was characterized as an introverted process of protectionism–coordinated at a supranational level, with the depth and breadth of interstate organization being the determining factors of successful integration (Söderbaum, 2004a, p. 21). However, from the mid-1980s onwards, a "new regionalism" has emerged in the context of "comprehensive structural transformation of the global system" (Hettne & Söderbaum, 2000, p. 457). This new regionalism is characterized by a multiplicity of complex and dynamic processes involving state and non-state actors engaged in transnational networks and is taking form as the result of emerging global, regional, national, and local social forces (Söderbaum, 2004a, p. 50).

As a result of the post-Cold War consolidation of neoliberal hegemony and accelerated processes of social, political, and economic globalization, it is impossible to isolate one level of analysis as dominant, as the level of importance and nature of interactions between the various levels can change, contingent upon a particular process' spatio-temporal situation (Hettne & Söderbaum, 2000, p. 457). To this end, the study of new regionalism(s) is most comfortably and appropriately situated within the tradition of critical international political economy. As Söderbaum noted,

> Critical international political economy (IPE) provides a useful analytical perspective for this endeavour, because it transcends state-centric ontology and rationalist epistemology and is concerned with structural and social change; historical power structures, emphasizing contradictions in them; and change and transformation expressed in normative terms.... [It] does not take states as givens, but neither does it wish them away, which is important in accounting for the changing governance structures in today's global political economy. (2004b, p. 419)

As critical international political economy emphasizes an examination of the historical contingency of the global structural conditions that influence and define the parameters of political-economic behaviour, processes of regionalism must be understood within the context of post-Cold War structural transformations in the global political economy and how these transformations have shifted the composition and character of regionalism(s) and the particular composition of the state-society complex in the contemporary global order. In so doing, the study of new regionalism(s) allows for a consideration of how regions are socially constructed and thereby politically contestable. The project of the NRA, rather than fixating on regional organizations and state actors, is to describe the processes by which a geographical area is transformed into an active political subject and how various actors are constituted in these processes as active agents capable of arti-

culating collective interests within the emerging regional and global order (Hettne & Söderbaum, 2001, p. 461).

Aside from the global or exogenous emphases of the NRA, there is a concomitant analytical shift to the endogenous forces of regionalism. Regionness is a pivotal concept for the NRA analyses of the endogenous forces of region formation. Regionness is to "define the position of a particular region in terms of regional cohesion, which can be seen as a long-term historical process, changing over time from coercion … to voluntary cooperation" (Hettne, 2005, p. 551). Regionness as a concept allows one to understand how a variety of formal and informal social, political, and economic actors interpret the idea of the region and to what extent these multiple interpretations of region find congruence or contradiction with each other (Söderbaum, 2004a, p. 47).

The notion of regionness is perhaps the most salient feature of the NRA that bridges the exogenous and endogenous forces of regionalization. Although the exogenous forces of global order bear influence on the formal macroregional project (often state-led and institutionally defined), these very influences are also responsible for what the NRA sees as the unbundling of the state through neoliberal globalization. As Taylor noted,

> Macro regions involve a monumental expansion in the proportion of a regional market, while at the same time diminishing the authority of political units…. [B]ecause of their scale, macro-regions are most likely to generate the greatest tensions and contradictions, and are least susceptible to the construction of any form of regionness. (2003, p. 315)

This unbundling makes the state but one actor among a plurality of formal and informal regional actors (Söderbaum, 2004a, p. 50). Networks formed by these informal actors may include, but are not limited to, transnational corporations, ethnic business networks, civil society organizations, private armies, and the informal border politics of small-scale trade, bartering, smuggling, and crime. These informal networks reflect microregional pro-

cesses that are more beholden to "real processes on the ground and constitute the interface between top-down and bottom-up regional processes (Söderbaum & Taylor, 2003, p. 3). At times, these formal and informal actors of regionalization act in opposition to each other, while at other times, myriad partnerships may exist between the formal, state actors, and informal actors (Söderbaum, 2004a, p. 51). To this end, the formal and informal modalities of regionalization must be analyzed within the same theoretical framework rather than arbitrarily separated. Multiple regional processes are occurring at multiple scales at a given place and point in time.

Simon expressed similar theoretical viewpoints as the NRA when he noted that it would be faulty to assume a single future for development and regionalism in Southern Africa. Rather, he maintained, it is important to consider regional processes as diverse and plural with divergent and convergent futures (Simon, 1998, p. 4). The neoliberal turn of regionalism in the SADC, as a factor in larger global restructuring processes, will impact different spaces in an asymmetrical and variegated fashion (Taylor, 2003, p. 314). Rather than producing a totalizing tendency towards homogenization, as proponents of (neoliberal) globalization claim, the unfettered movements of capital will produce uneven geographical developments, reflected in the "different ways in which different social groups have materially embedded their modes of sociality into the web of life" (Harvey, 2006, p. 77). As the regional centre of capital, South Africa's outward expansion of (often speculative) capital projects into Southern Africa as a means of dispersing its apartheid inheritance of crises of accumulation has had tremendous impact upon the myriad microregional processes emerging within the SADC (Bond, 2000, p. 49). These microregional responses manifest as Polanyian-type responses of societal self-protection to uneven geographical developments producing both convergent and divergent regional imaginaries

(Harvey, 2006, p. 114). Within the SADC, highlighting these plural tendencies of regionalism may help to identify the sources of contemporary xenophobia, while also revealing spaces for emergent contestation to neoliberal order.

From SADCC to SADC: Global Transformation and the Neoliberal Turn

The SADCC was established in 1980 by a core group of liberated Southern African states, Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe (Lee, 2003, p. 45). Given the geopolitical context of South Africa and the Total Strategy, the priorities of the SADCC were to reduce dependent relations in general, though particularly upon South Africa, and foster regional cooperation and development among liberated states through a deliberate and politically strategic coordination of donor funding (Sidaway & Gibb, 1998, p. 166). Market integration, as contemporary regionalism was being practised, was not an objective of the SADCC (Hentz, 2005, p. 28). This was largely due to the fact that the economies of Southern Africa lacked the requisite diversification (as most states remained primary product exporters), comparative advantage, and infrastructure to facilitate any meaningful economic integration (Lee, 2003, p. 47). For these reasons, regional cooperation and development were seen as a necessary precursor to market integration.[2]

The SADC was established in 1992 following the end of the Cold War and the proclaimed victory of the West. At this time the African National Congress (ANC) was negotiating its ascension of power in South Africa. For the SADCC, the implications of these

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[2]   See Seidman (1989) for a detailed analysis of the structural conditions that formed the basis for SADCC's emphasis on economic coordination and cooperation rather than integration, and some of the alternative strategies being tabled at this time.

geopolitical transformations was a contraction in the options for donor assistance outside of Western states and international financial institutions, where, during the Cold War and during the reign of apartheid, such alternatives had been available (Tsie, 1996, 78). The SADCC and its member states needed to acquiesce in order to stay afloat; alone, they simply did not have the resources to continue. Additionally, with the ending of apartheid, the SADCC could no longer position itself in opposition to South Africa, and thus needed to prepare for inclusion in the regional body.

Although these geopolitical transformations were significant, many of the fundamental structural conditions remained the same in Southern Africa. Most economies remained weak and undiversified and the region lacked the requisite infrastructure and comparative advantage to make market integration successful (Lee, 2003, p. 47). Perhaps most important, South Africa remained (and does to this day) the most industrialized state in the region, leading popular media and scholars alike to assert that SADC members were likely more dependent upon South Africa than they had ever been (Sidaway & Gibb, 1998, p. 166).

The role of external actors in influencing the shift in SADC regionalism, in accordance with the global structural transformation that occurred in the 1990s, is significant because the SADC and its member states have been largely dependent on foreign assistance and debt relief. Importantly, massive external debt in Southern Africa has been a significant factor in tying the region, politically and economically, to the West. Between 1986 and 1990, African countries paid back more to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) than they received in new assistance (Tsie, 1996, p. 76). This, in addition to the global recession of the 1980s, provoked a serious debt crisis in Southern Africa. The neoliberal policies pursued by many governments of advanced capitalist societies during the global recession had the effect of further indebting Southern

African states. Dollar-denominated debt, set against consistently depreciating national currencies, rendered Southern Africa largely unable to detach itself from the external political control of the West, as it continued to be reliant on foreign aid and debt relief (Tsie, 1996, p. 77).

The SADC itself is almost entirely reliant on external support. According to Lee, approximately 86% of the SADC's funding is derived from Western governments and international financial institutions (2003, p. 48). This continued trend of foreign dependency, coupled with a lack of feasible alternatives, has situated the region in a highly vulnerable and susceptible position. Given space constraints, it is not possible to provide a comprehensive overview of the specific arrangements and agencies involved in this externally imposed transformation, but I highlight below a few key moments in the transformation with regard to the SADC region and its member states primary donor community: the IMF, the World Bank, the European Union, and the United States.

First, the World Bank and the IMF, while previously sceptical of supporting regionalism in Southern Africa, instead favouring separate functional programmes and state-specific liberalization strategies, began to shift tactical strategies during the 1990s. The IMF and World Bank have since come to embrace open regionalism as a means of overcoming the fragmented opening of the region to the world economy, seeking to create "a sub-regional unified, open economic space for the free movement of goods, services, capital and people [and] move away from unsuccessful import substitution strategies" (Söderbaum, 2004a, p. 92).

Second, the European Union has been a key actor in promoting the new SADC regionalism, as well as in shifting the World Bank and IMF's regard for regionalism. According to Söderbaum, it was the EU that attempted to draw attention to the negative spillover effects of uncoordinated structural adjustment programmes, which was instrumental in changing the World Bank's and IMF's

attitude towards regionalism (2004a, p. 94). The EU emphasized that regionalism does not have to be an alternative to global market integration, but can be congruent with it, claiming that "successful integration requires a market-friendly economic environment [and] openness to third countries" (Söderbaum, 2004a, p. 95).

Third, beginning in 1996, there has been a reorientation in American policy towards the SADC, which has shifted engagement with aid to a relationship more focussed on trade (Lee, 2003, p. 48). The United States' African Growth Organization provides incentives in the form of debt relief, loan guarantees, business partnerships, and access to American markets, conditional upon the SADC's conformity to the norms of democratization, liberalization, and privatization (Söderbaum, 2004a, p. 93). The United States Agency for International Development's special Initiative for Southern Africa claims Southern Africa is a "promising" region. The objective of the initiative is to open markets and exports so as to promote a focus on growth-oriented reforms and the reintegration of South Africa into the regional economy on mutually beneficial terms (Söderbaum, 2004a, p. 93).

The brief overview above demonstrates how crucial external forces have approached aid and trade partnerships with the SADC using a markedly neoliberal strategy. However, South Africa and Botswana stand out as anomalies in this scenario. They did not cede to externally dictated structural adjustment programmes, but nevertheless undertook structural adjustment voluntarily "under the threat of losing international credit-worthiness" (Bond, 2003, p. 67). Importantly, South Africa, as the regional hegemon, has been instrumental in both embodying and conveying the hegemonic norms of neoliberalism on a national and regional scale.

When the ANC came into power in 1994, it received wide popular and electoral support, and was regarded as an alliance of Black nationalists with socialist unions and radical social move-

ments, seeking radical social, economic, and political change (Peet, 2002, p. 54). As such, the ANC's initial and formal economic policy was growth through redistribution. Not long after the fall of apartheid, however, the ANC gradually began to shift gears, adopting stringent fiscal and macroeconomic policies with an aim of promoting redistribution through growth. Although South Africa has received foreign debt relief and assistance, most notably the 1993 $850 million IMF Compensatory and Contingency Financing Facility, it has been unique in that it was not subject to the structural adjustment policies under which almost every other SADC member state undertook neoliberal restructuring (p. 73).

Rather, the ANC government undertook a self-imposed structural adjustment in the form of its 1996 Growth, Equity and Redistribution (GEAR) policy, a macroeconomic policy package that was decidedly "Thatcherite" in its orientation, as Thabo Mbeki once publicly announced (Bond, 2000, p. 82). Critical of wage and service expenditure, the ANC through GEAR sought a regressive tax on consumption, increased liberalization of exchange controls, wage freezes, supply-side incentives to promote investment and export competitiveness, and a restructuring of state assets through privatization and joint public–private ventures (Bond, 2000, p. 80). Although conceived of domestically, giving it the air of a homegrown macroeconomic policy, GEAR was mostly the product of ideological pressure from the international financial institutions (most notably the World Bank) as well as the complex of domestic interfaces between elites and key constituencies (Bond, 2000, p. 189).

As the ANC was negotiating the liberation of South Africa in the 1990s, its well-known socialist leanings had begun to concern the West. Previously a strategic regional bastion of liberal and Western norms, the newly independent South Africa could potentially become a counterhegemonic node in the South. Notably,

Bond argued, the ability of South Africa's Left and progressive forces to distance themselves from international financial institution borrowing was identified as a key threat by the World Bank (2000, p. 155). To this end, the early 1990s saw an increased scrutiny of South Africa by the World Bank and the IMF, whereby the World Bank courted leftist ANC members under the pretences of "trust-building" exercises and advisory roles (Peet, 2002, p. 73). Gumede described in detail these courting sessions:

> During 1992 and 1993 several ANC staffers, some of whom had no economic qualifications at all, took part in abbreviated executive training programmes at foreign business schools, investment banks, economic policy think tanks and the World Bank, where they were "fed a steady diet of neoliberal ideas." It was a dizzying experience. Never before had a government-in-waiting been so seduced by the international community. Both the World Bank and IMF sought to influence the ANC's economic policy, frequently warning against pursuing 'unorthodox' policies. (2005, p. 73)

Notably, the incumbent ANC minister of finance, Trevor Manuel, had been sponsored by the World Bank and IMF for training in orthodox international economics, and Prime Minister Nelson Mandela and his successor Thabo Mbeki were in frequent discussion with international financial instittuion elites and prominent Western policy advisors. The 1994 Reconstruction and Development Programme and the subsequent, highly reformatted GEAR were reviewed by a constellation of such elites and advisors of the West and the international financial institutions, including former advisor to the United States' Democratic Party, Stan Greenberg, who became the ANC-appointed policy advisor (Gumede, 2005, p. 76).

However, to reduce the ANC's transition to mere ideological courtship, as outlined above, would be far too simplistic and would ignore the complexities of interwoven agency and vulnerability that plagued the ANC. The apartheid state's political economy had been predicated on an accumulation strategy fuelled by

the exploitation of cheap Black labour for mineral extraction and the production of luxury goods. This racially inscribed accumulation strategy, however, failed to match mass production with mass consumption, leading to an acute crisis of overaccumulation, a legacy with which the ANC had to contend (Bond, 2000, p. 5).

On the level of acting elites, inviting the World Bank to take on assessment and advisory roles was viewed as a necessary measure for dealing with South Africa's capital crisis while keeping the bank at arm's length. In building a macroeconomic policy that was, ostensibly, to enable the avoidance of debt crises through liberalization, privatization, financialization, and the regional dispersion of overaccumulated capital, leading ANC architects of GEAR sought to decrease the potential conditions that would necessitate accepting an international financial institution loan, which would be conditionally attached to the more stringent macroeconomic structural adjustment packages (Bond, 2000, p. 10, p. 190). Through a combination of international ideological pressure and the ANC's vulnerable position in the emergent post-Cold War global order, South Africa undertook voluntary alignment with the Washington Consensus and global neoliberal hegemony. Former communist and ANC negotiator Mac Maharaj, speaking to the ideological corner into which the ANC was backed, claimed, "We could not go it alone. Countries that did this, such as Sweden, had the space to do so with the Cold War still raging and the world being bipolar. The ANC came to power at the end of the Cold War in a unipolar world. We had no room to manoeuvre" (Gumede, 2005, p. 76). By the time GEAR was tabled in 1996, Mandela and Mbeki both contended that in order for a Black government to be taken seriously and gain respect in the West, it needed to toe the line of orthodoxy (Gumede, 2005, p. 73).

In the context of a changing global order in the post-Cold War environment, the SADCC faced tremendous external and internal

pressure to conform the content of its regionalism to the norms and expectations of the now unipolar global order. The SADCC was thus transformed into the SADC and came to embrace neo-liberal orthodoxy and market integration as the means for regional development, promising redistribution, development, and poverty alleviation through growth. This shift was affected by the role of international financial institutions and key Western donor states in both directly and indirectly imposing the hegemonic norms of economic orientation onto individual states and the SADC as a whole. Along with the impact of international financial institutions and Western donors in reframing the SADC agenda, the role of South Africa has also been pivotal. To be sure, although the adoption of neoliberal orthodoxy via GEAR seemed to anticipate how South Africa would come to envision its regional relations, this line of explanation is not unproblematic. Hentz, for example, has argued that the evolution of South Africa's approach to regionalism has been the result of the ANC's negotiating a "complex political matrix'" between domestic labour and business interests (2005, p. 44).

Cross-Border Movements and Regional (Dis)Integration in the SADC

Southern Africa is a region imbued with deeply historical migration patterns. Throughout the 20th century, patterns of labour migration were, possibly, the single most important factor connecting the various colonies and countries into a regional labour market (Crush et al., 2005, 1). It is not an exaggeration to state that the political economy of Southern Africa, during this time, could only be understood with reference to labour migration (Andersson, 2006, p. 375).

The South African migrant labour system was the most prolific and far-reaching model, recruiting migrants to work in the mining and commercial agriculture sectors from nearly every other coun-

try in the region, throughout the 20th century. Figures for South Africa's contract labour migration range from 99,950 in 1920, to as high as 233,808 in 1960, tapering off in the 1990s at 192,044 (Crush et al, 2005, p. 3). The South African model of contract migrant labour became a model for the region, later adopted by Botswana, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia, and Zimbabwe (p. 4). Although the contract labour system was adopted elsewhere throughout the region, the patterns and benefits to be accrued from such a system remained largely skewed in favour of South Africa and its momentum towards industrialization. South Africa's ambitions of becoming a secondary producer and escaping what seemed to have been the fates of many other African countries, marginalized in the global economy as primary producers, necessitated the creation of economic linkages with neighbouring countries (West, 1990, p. 117). The reality of the Southern African region has been effectively predicated on these historical patterns of labour migration.

Though migration has historically characterized Southern Africa, the nature and composition of migration in the contemporary post-apartheid era is also fundamentally altered. Mobile populations remain a fundamental component of the region's political-economy, though the late 20th and early 21st centuries have witnessed an increasing informalization of migrants. Apartheid's accumulation strategy, premised largely on cheap and exploitable Black migrant labour in the extraction of natural resources and production of luxury goods, had produced an acute crisis of overaccumulation (Bond, 2000, p. 5). In order to deal with this crisis, the ANC government undertook a number of political and economic measures such as the formal promotion of domestic job creation and labour standards in South Africa, and a strategy of moving overaccumulated capital into infrastructural and speculative financial ventures, which concomitantly led to a significant reduction in the need for unskilled contract labour mi-

grants (Adepoju, 2001, p. 45; Andersson, 2006, p. 377; Bond, 2000, p. 49; Crush et al, 2005, p. 6). As a result of this reduction, the primacy of contract labour in the region's political economy has been increasingly supplanted by the informal sector, which is nevertheless largely contingent on mobile populations such as circular migrants and informal cross-border traders (Iheduru, 2003, p. 48; Boas, 2003, p. 34). Whereas, previously, a large proportion of migrant populations (though highly exploited) followed a formalized process, contemporary migration patterns in the region are increasingly placed outside of the parameters of supranational institutional consideration. This points to a marked disconnect between formal regionalism in practice and the realities of transnational linkages on the ground.

Having traced the shift in the SADC and its member states' policies from growth through redistribution to redistribution through growth, in this final section I demonstrate how the neo-liberal turn has created internal antagonisms through bottom-up regional pressures and a subsequent reassertion of the state at the border. Rising unemployment rates, wage freezes, and massive public sector retrenchment, coupled with the opening of borders to flows of trade and capital, have created the conditions for a significant expansion of the informal sector economy, increasingly characterized by cross-border movements (Tripp, 2001, p. 1). Recent SADC reports have said that over 45% of the total population within the SADC region lives on less than $1 per day, demonstrating the need of almost half the regional population for a social safety net of some sort (SADC, 2008, p. 1). In the absence of such social safety nets in much of the region, the informal sector and informal cross-border trade and migration have grown and become pivotal sites of livelihood strategies in the liberalizing the SADC. Popular estimates now assert that informal cross-border trade constitutes approximately 30 to 40 per cent of the value of SADC's formal regional trade, though because of its clan-

destine nature, the bottom line is largely unknown (Johnson-Nunez, 2009, p. 11). These growing cross-border movements are a significant factor of regionalizaton and represent what Söderbaum and Taylor have labelled informal micro-regionalism(s), the result of a disconnect between the formal project of regionalism through the SADC and the actual lived practices and perceptions of regional linkages on the ground (2003, p. 3). To the extent that these formal and informal processes contradict rather than support each other, the prospects of consolidating regionness are weakened.

In the process of growing formal and informal interstate linkages, there has been an increased emphasis on the securitzation of the border and migration policies in the SADC. Although the borders of states are becoming more porous to the movement of trade and capital, and thus to people as well, there have been significant attempts to reify the political border through exclusionary and often discriminatory migration policies in order to shut down the movement of peoples (Crush et al., 2006, p. 31). Yet, significant research has identified informal cross-border traders and migrants as an integral mechanism for promoting regional integration. The activities undertaken by informal cross-border traders and circular migrants serve to

> dismantle the structure of trade dominance biased toward the former
> colonial nations and instead strengthen intra-SADC trade by physically
> demonstrating the existence of a common market by bringing the con-
> cept of regional economic integration down to the individual level.
> (Johnson-Nunez, 2009, p. 31)

Furthermore, in a study of Zimbabwe's female cross-border traders, Muzvidziwa noted the propensity of their activities to necessitate and contribute to the creation of a transborder culture that transcends nationality and ethnic differences by emphasizing commonality through economic interdependence and cooperation (2001, p. 72). The SADC programme of action claims to

seek political, social, and economic development through the building of regional ties, a common values system and collective regional identity (Mulaudzi, 2009, p. 50). Yet the SADC's inability and unwillingness to provide a safe and facilitative environment for these microregional processes, which have the potential to lay the grounds for the realization of such objectives, has promoted regional disintegration rather than integration.

The case of South Africa can be used to illustrate these internal antagonisms for a number of reasons. Because South Africa is the major industrial centre of the SADC, it functions as the centripetal force of the region. The asymmetrical patterns of growth within the region, exacerbated by a region-wide adoption of neoliberalism, have largely accrued to South Africa, making it a primary destination for informal cross-border movements and trade. Official government figures as of May 2010 cite a South Africa-SADC trade surplus of nearly R2.3 billion (Department of Trade and Industry, 2010). Unevenly developed markets, largely derived from South Africa's export dominance in the region, have resulted in significant price differences and differing availability of commodities, providing the economic incentive and rationale for undertaking cross-border trade activities (Johnson-Nunez, 2009, p. 12). Coupled with growing region-wide unemployment, the relative strength of the South African economy has made it a centripetal force in the region, attracting informal cross-border traders and circular migrants, who use formal and informal routes of entry into the country (Akokpari, 1999, p. 4).

Second, the widespread failures of neoliberalism to promote redistribution through growth, both regionally and in individual states, can be seen as a root cause of the evocation of restrictionist immigration policies. Although South Africa has fared better at the macroeconomic level under regional liberalization, the implementation of domestic liberalization through the GEAR policy has, nevertheless, resulted in massive internal unemployment and

drastic cuts to social services and public sector wage freezes and retrenchment (Mulaudzi, 2009, p. 56). The South African state's inability to meet the needs of its national population has been a significant impetus for scapegoating informal cross-border migrants and traders, accusing them of undermining the national population's access to the South African economy and social services. Rather than addressing the systemic deficiencies of GEAR for alleviating national poverty and raising standards of living, South African officials deflect critical attention by accusing "illegal" foreigners of being impediments to the successful implementation of GEAR. Informal cross-border traders and migrants are accused of subverting (declining) formal employment opportunities and legislation for nationals by agreeing to work at lower unregulated wages, crowding out the informal sector economic livelihoods of nationals by setting up in South African urban markets, and draining the capacity of (already paltry) public services (Pederby, 2001, p. 24).

In response to in-migration, South Africa has established an extremely restrictionist immigration policy reminiscent of the apartheid era, centred on a draconian approach to border and heartland policing and attempts to control and halt both legal and undocumented migration (Pederby, 2001, p. 16). South Africa's exclusionary immigration policies can be seen as an attempt to restore state legitimacy in the "last bastion of sovereignty" under neoliberalism (the domain of security), where it otherwise lacks such sovereignty under austerity reforms (Söderbaum, 2004b, p. 433). To this end, a rise in xenophobia among the national population has ensued, promoting the reification of difference, rather than fostering a common regional identity and values framework. The rise of xenophobic attitudes can be evidenced in the number of violent eruptions that have occurred in South Africa against foreigners, in general, and informal economic operators, in particular. Incidences of xenophobic attacks in South Africa have been

resurgent since shortly after the democratic transition. The ongo-
ing incidences of xenophobia have ranged from the riots against
street vendors in Johannesburg in 1997; to the two-week-long
xenophobic attacks that spread like wildfire across South Africa in
May 2008, leaving 62 dead and more than 100,000 displaced; to
the current post-World Cup hostility, documented by threats to
foreigners by citizens and public servants alike and the evictions
of foreigners in order to "get rid of the *makwerekwere* [derogatory
name for Black foreigners]" (Johnston, 2010). The effect of these
circumstances on regionalism is a violent othering that fragments
the identification and consolidation of a common regional iden-
tity and values framework (regionness), from which meaningful
regional cooperation and development could otherwise emerge
(Mulaudzi, 2009, p. 56).

Third, the criminalization of SADC cross-border migrants and
traders has generated an illicit informal economy at the border. A
host of illicit economic activities have sprung up around "assist-
ing" informal migrants' entry into South Africa, including human
smuggling, bribes paid for entry or to escape deportation, bribes
paid for visas, etc. Corruption has become endemic at most South
African border posts (Crush et al., 2006, p. 8). These illicit border
economies are instructive as to the complex linkages between
formal and informal actors, as state officials eliciting bribes at the
border are intertwined with regional and transnational criminal
networks of human smugglers, such as the *maguma guma*. These
activities in themselves are indicative of informal micro-
regionalism(s) articulated through complex state-criminal network
linkages and highlight what some have argued is the increasing
criminalization of the state under neoliberalism (Vigneswaran,
2008, p. 6). Additionally, these economic activities thrive on the
maintenance of a stringent and exclusionary migration regime. To
the extent that public officials are able to extract rents from clan-
destine migration, there is an informal economic incentive to

subvert regional initiatives for a SADC-wide facilitation of movement and harmonization of migration policy (Vigneswaran, 2008, p. 13).

Finally, South Africa holds a significant amount of sway in terms of the types of regional arrangements that are passed through the SADC. South Africa's posture towards regional migrants has been significant in hampering the implementation of a regionally harmonized migration policy. The proposed SADC Free Movement Protocol of 1996, which was to confer the rights of employment, residence, and establishment to all SADC citizens and establish a SADC body of oversight specifically for the enforcement and implementation of the protocol, was vociferously rejected by South Africa (Williams & Carr, 2006, p. 11). The resultant Facilitation of Movement Protocol, which left the definitions of employment, residence, and establishment subject to domestic legislation, made no requirements for implementation and provided no body of oversight and enforcement, was largely the result of South African manufacture and coercion (Oucho & Crush, 2001, p. 150; Williams & Carr, 2006, p. 11). The result of this has been to render regionally governed migration policy impotent, so that migration policy remains firmly within the jurisdiction of the state. Failing a regional migration policy, the cross-border movements of peoples will continue to be couched in terms of border control, security, and exclusionary national citizenship rather than development and integration, further criminalizing foreigners and promoting regional disintegration rather than integration.

Conclusion

To date, regionalism in the SADC has largely failed to deliver on its programme of action, to promote equitable regional devel-

opment, raise the standards of living, and alleviate poverty. Understanding this failure requires moving beyond a functionalist approach that assumes structural fixity and sees interstate negotiations and institutions as the determinant factors in successful regional consolidation. As I have demonstrated here, to look at regionalism in the contemporary global political economy requires moving beyond formal interstate relations. Although functionalist analysis can provide some insight into how regional-level policies are negotiated, implemented, and enforced, it fails to consider how multiple regional processes are occurring at multiple scales, pursued by different actors towards different ends. In approaching regionalism in the SADC through the lens of the NRA, one can uncover a myriad of regional processes occurring simultaneously, promoted by both formal and informal actors.

By situating the transformation of the SADCC into the SADC within the wider transformations occurring in the global political economy, I have shown how the SADCC, which was cautious of Western economic orthodoxy and market integration as the means to region-wide development, was transformed into the SADC, which has come to embrace economic orthodoxy and austerity measures. Although the conditions that underpinned the SADCC's rationale for distinguishing itself from the Western model of integration had not changed, global pressures to conform to neoliberal hegemony affected a policy shift in the regional body's *modus operandi*. Thus, at the formal level, a particular form of regionalism has been pursued, heavily influenced by neoliberal hegemony and the interests of global capital and regional elites.

The shift to neoliberal orthodoxy within the SADC as a whole, and within individual member states, however, has in turn produced bottom-up informal regional pressures through the creation of an environment conducive to a proliferation of informal cross-border movements and trade. These informal movements

and economic activities represent the livelihood strategies of the majority of the SADC population, which trickle-down growth has yet to reach. This is enabled by increasingly porous borders, rising unemployment rates that have resulted from region-wide and state-led liberalization, and the region's uneven geographical development (Bond, 2000, p. 9).

As Taylor noted, informal micro-regional processes represent the interface between elite-driven agendas and the popular reactions they elicit, making more readily identifiable the "imminent possibilities of transformative counter-movements" (2003, p. 316). As bottom-up processes, informal cross-border traders and circular migrants are more intimate with and responsive to the particular socioeconomic, labour, and cultural needs of Southern Africa's peoples (Johnson-Nunez, 2009, p. 12-13). They can, if properly facilitated, represent not just livelihood strategies, but also spatial practices that can challenge and transform the uneven geographic development of Southern Africa at the micro level, as well as foster a common identity and values framework premised on solidarity and interdependency. Yet the policy environment in the SADC (most notably South Africa) has, to date, marginalized and criminalized such integrative potentials amongst mobile populations.

South Africa, as a major destination for regional cross-border migrants and informal traders, rather than enabling greater intraregional movement to facilitate closer regional integration, has attempted to stem the flow of migrants through a criminalizing and restrictionist migration policy. This restrictionist migration policy might be seen as an attempt to reassert state legitimacy in terms of securitized borders, and is otherwise effectively impotent. The criminalization of cross-border migrants and informal traders has contributed to a rise in xenophobic attitudes, thus detracting from the construction of a common regional identity and values, and provided economic incentive for the continued crimi-

nalization of migrants through a maintenance of restrictionist migration policies. Thus, the shift to market integration in the SADC has produced concomitant processes of integration and disintegration.

As the NRA emphasizes, regionalism cannot simply be reduced to interstate negotiations and trade liberalization. Cross-border migration and informal trade have been long-standing features of the Southern African political economy, becoming all the more prevalent under liberalization measures, albeit in different forms. A cogent analysis of the possibilities, limitations, and actualities of regionalism must move beyond formal economic and political measures to also take into consideration the informal manners through which regionalism(s) is constructed. In so doing, it becomes possible to identify the potential counter-forces and agents of transformation that are arising within contemporary global restructuring and taking form through articulations of cultural identity, self-organization, and self-protection (Söderbaum & Taylor, 2003, p. 16). Transformative counterforces of self-organization and self-protection, however, will not necessarily be progressive in their agendas. This point is most amply demonstrated through the reactionary articulations of xenophobia, which are emergent features of the post-liberalization SADC environment. Studying informal cross-border traders and circular migrants as microregional actors may better enable scholars and policy makers to promote the progressive, transformative, and integrative potentials therein, while identifying where such processes might elicit reactionary and disintegrative movements.
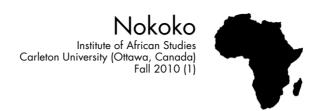
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"Setting the agenda for our leaders from under a tree":
The People's Parliament in Nairobi[1]

Wangui Kimari & Jacob Rasmussen

In Kenya the social movement (Bunge la Mwananchi) concept has grown organically and spread in towns across the country. The oldest gathering being Jeevanjee grounds where members meet every day for more than 15 years now. Amongst the towns that the movement has grown are Mombasa, Kisumu, Eldoret, Nakuru and Kakamega. The unique thing about the movement is that membership is voluntary and one can participate in actions anytime and disengage at will. This has enabled the movement to survive being hijacked by donors or infiltration by state security agents, who apparently are not amused when ordinary citizens have the audacity to take a matter affecting them into their own hands

— *A Call to Liberation*, Bunge la Mwananchi (2009)

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[1]   The article is dedicated to the memory of our friend and engaged activist in Bunge la Mwananchi, Jacob Odipo Odhiambo, who passed away on November 4th, 2010.

In a park in the heart of Nairobi, members of Bunge la Mwananchi, which means "the people's parliament" in Swahili, meet every day. Four benches placed in the cool shade of bougainvillea trees form the physical base of the parliament, or Bunge, as it is more colloquially known. Each day, heated debates about topical issues concerning Kenyan politics and the occasional scandal take place. The daily gatherings are public debating forums, open to all ethnic groups, genders, occupations, and party affiliations. By virtue of this inclusivity, Bunge la Mwananchi transgresses many of the boundaries that routinely frame Kenyan politics.[2]

Bunge la Mwananchi is one of the most vocal grassroots organizations in Nairobi and defines itself as a social movement. There is no formal membership required and the movement is made up of whoever chooses to be part of it. Nevertheless, there are an increasing number of people whose sustained presence and practice has permitted for them to be regarded as essential members, and it is from these people that a ceremonial "leader"[3]

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[2] Even with this inclusivity and the outreach that has been done to ensure as much diversity as possible, the typical Bunge member is male, between 25 and 45 year of age, and of any possible ethnic affiliation. To our knowledge, there are not many people of different abilities/disabled who participate in Bunge. Nevertheless, within the last two years, since the Bunge women's movement (these are women in Bunge and in the Bunges around Nairobi) has begun to gain more ground, there is more and more gender diversity within Bunge.

[3] Although the membership of Bunge is in constantly in flux, there is a group of core members (a core that is constantly increasing) who have been attending Bunge the longest. When we refer to Bunge we refer not to just this core group but to the increasing number of people, who although they do not come to the park every day, identify as being part of Bunge. To our knowledge there has never been an attempt to count all of these people, but a conservative guess is that least 5000 people identify as being part of Bunge in Nairobi. It is important to note that there are also other Bunges across the country with a membership that is growing and each of these Bunges are organised according to community requirements. In addition, Bunge is intentionally de-hierarchical and the aforementioned core group of members hold no formal position in the movement, but their experiences, dedication and contributions are highly valued. It is usually from these members who are consistently present at the park that a ceremonial leader (who can also be called Ambassador, President, Chairman or Speaker) is chosen. The role of this leader is for the most part to present the face of the movement – both for members and

is chosen every two years. The majority of the participants in the movement come from the lower socioeconomic strata of Kenyan society, and consequently it would seem that Bunge la Mwananchi is at the margins of Kenyan society and politics. However, the focus of this article is not to discuss whether Bunge la Mwananchi is marginal or not. Rather the aim is to understand the everyday practices and transgressions of political boundaries of Bunge la Mwananchi by looking at the creative processes of alternative politics its members employ in a country where the common person's access to the formal political system is limited. Such an endeavour does not deny the existence of hegemonic political hierarchies and centre-periphery relations that frame Kenyan politics, but instead it highlights the everyday political practices of Bunge la Mwananchi to reveal how members practice a politics without boundaries.

A central assumption in the article is that to be able to claim a politics without boundaries and to focus analytically on the challenges and transgressions of the boundaries, one must recognize the existence of boundaries. Bearing this in mind, it is important to note that, despite our use of the notion of margins when describing Bunge la Mwananchi, our emphasis is on how members deliberately use and reproduce their marginal position to transgress and overcome not only the marginality of the social movement, but political boundaries in general. Essentially, we look at how members of Bunge la Mwananchi continuously struggle for space while concomitantly challenging hegemonic pre-defined perceptions of space in their work, work that endeavours to establish and fortify "infrastructures of resistance" that they recognize as engendering the alternate democracies needed by the Kenyan people. Here, space is understood as both physical and political.

for observers – as decisions are never taken by the leader alone. However there are also some members who may be chosen as leaders of a specific activity. The present ceremonial leader of Bunge at Jeevanjee gardens is a young woman called Dinah Awuor.

Before we detail the history of Bunge la Mwananchi and engage in an analysis of their political practices, we need to outline the understanding of political engagement and political practice that frames our analysis of Bunge la Mwananchi's actions. The analyses in the sections following the theoretical outline focus primarily on the appropriation of space (physical and political) and the often non-conformist and counterhegemonic approaches to politics. The article is based on ethnographic material, which stems from Kimari's on-off engagement in Bunge la Mwananchi's activities between 2007 and 2010 and from Rasmussen's cumulative year of fieldwork in Nairobi between 2008 and 2010. Our collaborative effort combines the gazes of two differently positioned anthropologists, who could be conceptualized as an insider and an outsider, but perhaps are better distinguished as an observing participant and a participant observer.

Being Political

As has already been mentioned in the introduction, our focal concern is how the members of Bunge la Mwananchi are political. Nevertheless, before we can investigate their political practices in more detail we need to outline how we can theoretically understand their ways of being political. In this regard, we have found great inspiration in Isin's (2002; 2005) philosophical approach to ways of being political and are also informed by Gramsci's (1971) discussion on hegemony.

In his work, Isin is concerned with what he terms "the city as a difference machine" and with "investigating citizenship historically as a generalized problem of otherness" (2005, p. 374). A key point in his argument is the distinction between politics and being political (Isin 2002; 2005). Though our concern is not with citizenship and otherness as such, nor with the city, we do investigate Bunge la Mwananchi members' attempts at political inclusion

(from a perceived outsider position) through their various every-day practices in the city of Nairobi. Nevertheless, we are princi-pally interested in a specific element of Isin's analysis, namely his perception of everyday ways of being political, which we find par-ticularly helpful in understanding Bunge la Mwananchi and its members' activities.

Isin defines being political as relational and as expressed through people's everyday activities (2005, p. 382). This doesn't mean that any everyday activity qualifies as a way of being politi-cal; one only becomes political when one's activities question the virtues of the dominant or when they reveal the arbitrariness of this dominance (Isin, 2002, p. 21). This can be done by making claims of justice either as dissent, affirmation, or resistance (Isin, 2005, p. 382). It is the actions that challenge, expose, and re-define the previous meaning and order of existing political domi-nation that qualify as ways of being political (Isin, 2002, pp. 21–22). In other words, being and becoming political is dynamic and momentary, temporal and fluid, and is as much about agency as it is about claiming rights and justice.[4]

In his discussion of what constitutes the political, Isin draws on a variety of disparate thinkers such as Heidegger, Foucault, Weber, Elias, and Simmel to name just a few. Though our concern here is with the above outline of how one becomes political, this outline would make little sense if we failed to interrogate how Isin arrives at his definitions. In short, he argues that citizenship is relational; it is about the dominant groups of the city articulating their virtues, morals, and identities as citizens, thus defining

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[4] Isin's argument is more complex than the summary here; for example he sug-gests that *forms* (orientations, strategies, and technologies), *modes* (solidaristic, agonistic, and alienating) and *positions* (citizen, outsider, stranger, and alien) together form ways of being political (Isin, 2002; 2005). Though we talk of forms in terms of strategies, modes in form of resistance, and positions in forms of marginalization, we are more interested in a practical application of Isin's ideas in the analysis of everyday political processes and practices than in distinguishing specific forms, modes, and positions.

themselves against others (strangers, outsiders, and aliens). However, Isin argues that these dominant articulations do not constitute politics in itself nor are they examples of ways of being political, as one only becomes political in the moment when hierarchical positions are questioned, redefined, reversed, and re-evaluated. It is this element of being and becoming political that renders imperative the questioning of the arbitrariness of dominance, which we complement with Gramsci's (1971) discussions on hegemony.

Bunge members, in their rejection of the hegemonic "common sense" of politics in Kenya — a common sense that is also shared by the civil society — act in ways that are often counterhegemonic, because they seek to create alternate institutions and a strong and questioning civil society that is not the vanguard of a "passive revolution" but rather resists the hegemony of the dominant class (see Cox and Sinclair, 1996, p. 129). There are exceptions to this, such as when alliances are made with members of the civil society such as NGOs, as seen during the recent 2010 campaign for a new Kenyan constitution in Kenya. Nevertheless, in their day-to-day practices in both political and physical space, seeking to undermine the hegemonic political and social structures that have been put in place, Bunge members more often than not act in ways that are counterhegemonic in their insistence (both in theory and praxis) that what is really required are the negation of the hegemonic "commonsense" politic and rather the implementation of alternate forms of democracy. Therefore, we find it fitting to use both Isin's (2002; 2005) discussions on being political that are part of his discussions of historical citizenship as well as Gramsci's (1971) concept of hegemony in order to understand political practice at the grassroots level in Kenya.

Though Isin has the historical Western city as the locus of his analysis, his ambition is to challenge the notion that citizenship could have developed only in Western cities, thus refuting the

notion that it is only in these spaces where people have struggled to constitute themselves (Drummond & Peake, 2005, 341-342). We therefore find some support for our attempt at applying parts of his argument in an empirically different setting and context than the Western city. We take the risk of not only simplifying Isin's theoretical and philosophical argument but also turning away from his focus on citizenship and instead looking at only one aspect, namely the process-oriented and dynamic political practice. We claim that our exegetic reading of Isin, complemented by Gramsci's discussion of hegemony, provides us with a framework for understanding how Bunge la Mwananchi members practice a politics without boundaries.

Jeevanjee Gardens and Bunge La Mwananchi: Incarnating Democratic Participation in the City

The park that hosts Bunge la Mwananchi's very lively daily debates is called Jeevanjee Gardens. The raked paths and well-kept lawns are the result of a recent rejuvenation of the site. With the shade of bougainvillea and jacaranda trees, the park provides a resting place for office workers and students from the nearby Nairobi University, or whoever chooses to pass through from the bustling city centre. In the centre of the park, two small statues guard each side of the common green space. These imperial busts are reminiscent of a different time, portraying Queen Victoria and the original founder of this recreational space, Alibhai Mulla Jeevanjee. Bunge la Mwananchi members have their parliament in the quiet northeastern corner of this location. It has not always been this quiet though, for both Bunge la Mwananchi and the park have over the years been at the centre of struggles over their right to exist.

If Bunge la Mwananchi represents a grassroots alternative to political participation, Jeevanjee Gardens constitutes an alternative

political space as it has been a contested site since its creation in 1906 (Patel, 1997, p. 211). Like many other colonial cities, Nairobi was planned as a segregated city, where areas were designated hierarchically for the different "racial" groups: the Europeans, the Indians, and the Africans. The founder of the park, the Indian businessman Jeevanjee, had the ambition of creating a public leisure area for urban residents and not only the Europeans. As an homage that would make it difficult for the imperial government to oppose the park, the statue of the British queen was erected at the centre of Jeevanjee Gardens as an honour to the British royal family. Though Jeevanjee's grandchild Zarina Patel has described it as a sincere respect paid to the royal family, the statue also stands as an example of creative resistance against the otherwise exclusive politics of space in Nairobi at the time.

In the early 1990s, motivated by the *laissez-faire* approach to urban planning in Nairobi, developers planned to build an underground carpark at Jeevanjee Gardens, and the park was threatened with demolition. At that time, Jeevanjee Gardens was considered a no-go area inhabited by street-preachers, homeless families, and criminals. A campaign lead by descendants of A. M. Jeevanjee, and supported by the winner of the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize Wangari Maathai, managed to mobilize people in defence of the park and against the grabbing of public land (Patel, 1997, p. 216). At that time, before the multi-party elections of 1992 when public debate and political gathering were not without risk, the park was protected through the support and protests of a diversity of people. In celebration of this feat, the Jeevanjee family donated a number of benches to the park.

In the latter part of the 1990s, people from various informal forums around the city (bus stages and street walks) took their debates to the park, as the Nairobi City Council launched a crackdown on street hawkers, vendors, preachers, and political agitators in the downtown core of the city. The debates took place on

two of the donated benches that faced each other and were in-
itially referred to as simply "a place to sit" but quickly became
known as the "people's gatherings." These debates marked the
beginning of Bunge la Mwananchi, whose members today meet
around four benches. During the early hours of the afternoon,
these benches are surrounded by concentric circles of people lis-
tening to and engaging in communal discussions. Despite having
gathered in Jeevanjee Gardens since the 1990s, Bunge la
Mwananchi gained its name in 2003, when the movement held its
first elections as a mockery of the parliamentary elections that
were held in December 2002. These elections signalled the
broadening of a national space that permitted freer public dia-
logue and debate, but in no way did they hasten the decriminali-
zation of dissent. Until 2002, the associational space in Kenya
had been limited, despite the first steps towards free assembly
that were taken with the introduction of multi-party democracy in
1992 (Nasong'o, 2007, p. 33). Nevertheless, Bunge la Mwanan-
chi members still find their meetings occasionally interrupted by
the police and a significant number of their members under fre-
quent surveillance[5] (see *Sukuma Kenya*, 2009, and Human Rights
House, 2010).

The daily meetings in the park have become an institution in
Nairobi and have established an alternative political space in the
city. They have become a public training ground for both political

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[5]   It is becoming increasingly frequent for Bunge la Mwananchi meetings to be
disrupted by the police and members to be arrested for "idling in the park" or
being part of an "illegal one-man assembly" or an "illegal movement," despite
the fact that affairs are conducted in the open (Nyongesa, 2009). Even when
not at Jeevanjee Gardens, members have been arrested. One example of this
occurred on February 22, 2009 when Gacheke Gachihi, a long-term member of
Bunge La Mwananchi, was arrested that Sunday morning while he was drink-
ing tea in a local restaurant in his neighbourhood (*Sukuma Kenya*, 2009). On
the more extreme end of this surveillance and persecution, some members
such as Samson Owimba Ojiayo and Godwin Kamau Wangoe have been ab-
ducted and harassed and their families have been threatened as a direct result
of their political work (Human Rights House, 2010).

debate and agitation and a space for creative political practice. In a bid to expand these spaces, Bunge la Mwananchi is in the process of setting up "congresses" all over Kenya and around the different neighbourhoods within Nairobi. Even so, the forum in Jeevanjee Gardens retains a special position within the movement. In Nairobi, Jeevanjee Gardens is often just referred to as "Bunge" (Parliament). Insiders use this colloquial term to refer not only to the park, but also to mark the particular Bunge faction meeting there as the main part of the movement. In many ways the park and the movement have a dialogical relation, as Jeevanjee Gardens historically presents itself as a place that not only encourages political being but also as a place whose existence has relied on people's resistance to dominance — on their being political.

Bunge la Mwananichi members define themselves as part of a social movement, but contrary to members in many other social movements, they accept affiliation to political parties across the spectre (Bunge la Mwananchi, 2009; cf. Castells, 1983). Bunge la Mwananchi's somewhat organic growth out of the park also sets it apart from many other traditional social movements, in the respect that it has not evolved into a social movement from a fight for a specific localized goal, such as local service provision, housing rights, and local environmental issues (see Castells, 1983). This is the case of many of Bunge la Mwananchi's African allies, such as the South African slum dwellers movement Abahlali baseMjondolo, which grew out of the fight against evictions. What Bunge la Mwanachi shares with these other more traditionally founded social movements is their grassroots orientation, their un-hierarchical organization, their partiality to mass action and activism, and their revocation of class aspects, understood as a conflictual relation to the state (see Castells, 1983; Ferrarotti, 2007; Melucci, 1989).

"The Kenya we DO NOT want"

The political actions and everyday practices of Bunge la Mwananchi members relate in one way or the other to their over-all aims and objectives as a movement. In order to discuss their political practices and their ways of being political, we need to contextualize the movement, by conveying its historical background, aims, and objectives.

In 2009, Bunge la Mwananchi members arranged an alternative workshop called "The Kenya we DO NOT want" in response to a highly publicized and expensive government conference titled "The Kenya we want." This workshop was motivated by what Bunge members perceived as the government's neglect of salient issues such as poverty, high food prices, corruption, and human rights abuses in its recently published vision for Kenya (Bunge la Mwananchi, 2010). The alternative event and its sarcastic title reveal the arbitrariness of the government's agenda and the contention over who *is* the "We" that is spoken of, a contention that illustrates the division between the political elite and the ordinary people of Kenya.

The workshop is but one example of the activities of Bunge la Mwananchi members that express dissatisfaction with the government and the present state of things: the "common sense" that prevails in Kenyan politics. In pamphlets are phrases such as "a call for liberation" and "dreaming of another Kenya," as well as "We aspire to mobilize one Kenyan at a time into a strong political force that will transform Kenya's politics" (Bunge la Mwananchi, 2010, p. 8). In their activities and in their written sources, it is apparent that members are working to create "infrastructures of resistance" to engender the societal change needed for political transformation in Kenya. The overlapping desires for political transformation are expressed and employed in the members' daily debates and actions in the park.

Furthermore, Bunge la Mwananchi's mission statement reiterates the same quest for "a Kenya where citizens enjoy unfettered sovereignty to organize so as to free themselves from all forms of oppression and domination; are aware of their socio-economic and political rights and responsibilities, demand accountability, and have accessible opportunities and resources to realize their full potential" (Bunge la Mwananchi, 2010, p. 10). The very foundation of Bunge la Mwananchi, the quest for change, and the will to fight for transformation by challenging, redefining, and exposing, is consistent with Isin's (2002; 2005) ideas of being political, as it is about questioning the authority of leaders by making claims of freedom, rights, and justice. The goal that is fervently pursued is change, inclusion, and influence, and it is about setting the agenda for the leaders from under a tree.

A Politics without Boundaries and Bureaucracy

Bunge la Mwananchi is not registered with the Non-Governmental Organisation Co-ordination Board of Kenya as an NGO, nor with the Department of Culture and Social Services or any Provincial Administration as a community-based organization. In addition, the movement is not the project of any organization, business, or politician. Consequently, Bunge la Mwananchi has often been criticized for not having a formal or registered status. It is accused for being a movement that is not expressly anchored in the governmentality of a "liberal democracy,"[6] and of merely "doing noise" and being no better than "mobsters,"[7] as

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[6]   The assumption that Kenya is any sort of democracy would be sneered at during any Bunge la Mwananchi meeting.

[7]   On a Kenyan Discussion Platform called Jukwaa, Bunge's call for the resignation of members of the Kenyan cabinet who had voted against the new constitution was being discussed. One contributor to this discussion *Kamalet*, in the voicing of his discontent against this call by Bunge called them "mobsters." This can be found on the following link from the Jukwa Pro Boards site.

one observer noted. Despite this, Bunge la Mwananchi members have chosen to remain organic and informal, regardless of the fervent criticism this provokes (Bunge la Mwananchi, 2010).

What are the reasons for this rejection of formality, the disavowal of an institutionalized status that would confer legitimacy and allow for the negation of the "noise makers" title? In this section we analyse in detail the reasons for the aversion to institutionalization. Although Bunge la Mwananchi members are insistent about not registering, they still consent to alliances with many of the formal organizations that constitute the "Euro Dollar Chaser Industry," as the movement members have dubbed the NGOs and other civil society organizations whose intentions they often hold suspect (Bunge la Mwananchi, 2010).

The reluctance of Bunge la Mwananchi members to institutionalization indicates their concern with the stringencies that would result from such a formality. For the purposes of this article, these concerns are captured in three broad and overlapping themes.

First, there is a recognition by members of Bunge la Mwananchi that the registering body that would confer to them an institutional legitimacy is part of the very same governing structure and "historical bloc" (Gramci, 1971) that contributes to their marginality and the severe human conditions that most Kenyans live in. Therefore, participation in this system would render the task of questioning the arbitrariness of dominance increasingly difficult, a task Isin (2002) asserts as imperative for being and becoming political. This is because registration in any national organization would regulate and restrain Bunge la Mwananchi's activities much more than the periodic disruption of their meetings by the police, thus hindering the counter-hegemonic strategies and technologies that are essential to the movement (cf. Gramsci, 1971). Further-

http://jukwaa.proboards.com/index.cgi?board=general&action=display&thread=4374

more, this is coupled with the reality that a large majority of the organizations that are registered often become part of what Shivji (2007) terms the "neo-colonial offensive" and what Bunge la Mwananchi members deem the "Euro-Dollar chaser Industry" (Bunge la Mwananchi, 2010). In regards to the latter, the Bunge la Mwananchi secretariat asserts,

> The mainstream civil society has turned itself into "Euro-Dollar" chaser industry focussed on championing Western interests at all costs. This repugnant behaviour has turned civil society into an elite society of academicians writing proposals, papers, holding workshops and press conferences one after the other, without much or anything to show for it in terms of positive change. It is the impatience with this sad state of affairs and an appreciation of a functional civil society as strong pillar in a functional democracy that formed the crucible that crystallised Bunge la Mwananchi as an organic movement. The movement is an initiative to leverage people's individual passions to create collective action and to put a human face on depersonalized policy discussions on complex socio-economic problems bedevilling a majority of our people (Bunge la Mwananchi Secretariat, Bunge La Mwananchi, 2010).

Nevertheless, it is important to re-emphasize that Bunge la Mwananchi members often create alliances with some of these "Euro–Dollar Chaser" organizations. Isin points out that "while the logics of exclusion would have us believe in zero–sum, discrete and binary groups, the logics of alterity assume overlapping, fluid, contingent, dynamic and reversible boundaries and positions where beings engage in solidaristic strategies" (2002, p. 17). These alliances are forged in accordance with a solidarity strategy, with the ultimate goal of political transformation. Bunge la Mwananchi's mission is defined by the following three enterprises: "organizing citizenry, setting the agenda, transforming lives" (Bunge la Mwananchi, 2010).

Second, as has been discussed earlier, Bunge la Mwananchi is a movement that began through informal and organic embodied practices that were not the impetus of any institution. Akin to

many of the historical resistance movements in Kenya, Bunge la Mwananchi was merely continuing "the culture of coming together among Kenyans, formally or informally, in neighbourhoods, at the markets, on the roadside, under a tree etc to dialogue on pertinent community issues" (Bunge la Mwananchi, 2010). Members assert that it is this type of coming together "that fomented political consciousness among Kenyans for self determination towards democratic rule" and moreover that

> This politics-motivated coming together can be traced to the 80s and 90s, during the agitation for multiparty democracy, when it was difficult to freely organize political meetings in fear of former President Moi's use of the Kenya Police to terrorise dissenting voices. During this period of terror, Kenyans involved in the underground struggle for change would hold secret meetings, especially in the parks such as Jeevanjee Gardens Park in Nairobi to exchange views on Kenya's political problems (Bunge la Mwananchi Secretariat, Bunge La Mwananchi, 2010).

A formalized status would not sustain the informality that is characteristic of this type of grassroots organizing. The formalizing of Bunge la Mwananchi, and the hierarchy that would be imposed by institutionalization, would work to negate the intentional personal-community and inclusive dynamic that prevails, a dynamic that permits for people from all walks of life — "progressive university intellectuals, conscious students, politicians and the disempowered population of workers, peasants and unemployed" (Bunge la Mwananchi, 2009) — to come together. Rather than allowing for "the reality of the social world [where] in the everyday experiences of beings, there are no clear group boundaries and group identifications or affiliations and disassociation or differentiations are multiple, fluid and overlapping" (Isin, 2002, p. 16), the registration of Bunge la Mwananchi would lead to the privileging of such factors as education, professionalism, national identification documents, hierarchical structures, and registration fees. This would create both tacit and visible limitations to partici-

pation, engendering ruptures between this organic social movement and the history that provoked its becoming.

In addition, the issues that are interrogated and the "direct political action" employed by Bunge la Mwananchi members (Bunge la Mwananchi, 2010) would not be possible if the movement's actions had to be approved by an overseeing body. As a consequence of their deliberate institutional marginality, members can freely discuss Kenya's "flag independence" and "imperialist allies." And they can support and contextualize comments on their website about being "governed by mostly mentally ill or bankrupt, definitely in all cases stupid self-serving politicians, each aspiring to be the richest lazy fool in the world sitting like an over-fed baboon atop the tallest tree in our devastated and rotting vineyard, savouring their exploits amidst squalor, hunger and decaying corpse" (Osahon, 2010). If Bunge la Mwananchi were registered or a project of a civil society group, the explicit and unrelenting opinionation and direct political action employed by members would most likely be vetoed by a governing body or an organization accountable to an international donor or the national government.

Its informal status, which initially appears to emphasize the boundaries to political participation, conversely works to the benefit of Bunge la Mwananchi. For it is in the role of outsiders within a "passive revolution" that members are able to more efficiently and creatively question the arbitrariness of the municipal and national governments. As we have seen, Bunge la Mwananchi members are able to participate in both formal and informal settings, and they navigate and transgress these boundaries with an immense knowledge of the city, with resourcefulness and determination to carry out their political agenda. Isin argues that "we may owe the existence of politics not to citizens but to […] outsiders" (Isin, 2002, p. 26), and in this regard we can think of Bunge la Mwananchi members' intentional marginality in relation

to Kenyan formal politics as a positional strategy, one that allows them to more insightfully challenge the hegemony of the dominant political class.

The "Mwananchi Freedom from Hunger Train": Debating the City

When Rasmussen passed by Jeevanjee Gardens on a February day in 2010, there was a heated debate about the constitutional draft that was being assessed by the government. A group of men were concerned about rumours that rights for homosexuals would be introduced in the proposed constitution. In response to this concern, others argued that it was a strategic card played by clever politicians who wanted to divert people's attention from the "real issues" by introducing a controversial theme such as gay rights. On a previous occasion, the debate had been about food shortages in remote areas of Kenya, and another day it had concerned housing and civic rights. On all of these occasions there was consensus that the "real issues" of food shortages and housing policies were grave and required immediate resolution. Despite this consensus, there was disagreement about how best to solve the problems and where to place the responsibility for their persistence. Despite Bunge la Mwananchi's declared openness to all party affiliations and ethnic identities, issues of who to blame sometimes brought about accusations of ethnically motivated politics, which then fuelled debates about ethnicity internally in Bunge.

Though the debates in Jeevanjee Gardens are often vibrant, detailed, and well informed, they are more often than not characterized by disagreement, and few decisions and agreements are actually made here. Many people from Jeevanjee Gardens meet in small groups in restaurants and teahouses around the city before or after going to the park. It is often in these small groups of likeminded people that activities are planned and decisions are

taken. After brainstorming beforehand about what activities should take place, these groups then introduce their ideas in Jeevanjee Gardens in order to gain wider support in terms of mobilizing people or raising funds. Nevertheless, regardless of the popularity of proposed ideas, they usually do not remain uncontested.

A number of these different groupings affiliated with Bunge la Mwananchi collaborate with civil society organizations and NGOs, which in turn are intent on making alliances with this increasingly powerful and ubiquitous grassroots movement. Bunge la Mwananchi members have been involved in spearheading a demonstration for a proposed free information bill in parliament. They have been commentators at public debates at cultural institutions such as the Goethe Institute and fierce critics of impunity at debates arranged by Release the Political Prisoners and Kenyans Against Impunity. Furthermore, one evening while Rasmussen watched a public debate on TV, a participant from the audience who had asked critical questions introduced himself as a member of Bunge la Mwananchi. As briefly illustrated by the above examples, the members of Bunge la Mwananchi are negotiating and pushing their way into debates all over the city and they take every opportunity to get their message across.

French philosopher de Certeau (1988) has written about how the ordinary person can change and influence the city space by taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the moment. He defines space as relational, that is, the meaning ascribed to a certain space depends on the people passing through this space and the events that take place there. Therefore, space is not defined only by its immediate functions or by the intentions ascribed to it by planners and lawmakers. Central to de Certeau's theory of man's appropriation of space is that it is temporal. De Certeau argues that the ordinary person influences space through hers or his practices in it, but these actions only redefine the meaning of a

certain space for a short time as the space opens itself to other influences and other inscriptions when the person leaves. In other words "what he gains he can't keep", but this does not diminish the power of what has been gained in that moment.

When Bunge la Mwananchi members use events other than their own to make their voice heard, they take advantage of the moment, redefine the space, and make it theirs. When moving within and about Nairobi to attend various events, they take advantage of what the city has to offer in terms of public platforms and in this way they expand their use of space beyond Jeevanjee Gardens. Regardless of whether their appropriations of city space are temporary, they change the meaning of spaces and events by using them as platforms for their political agenda.

It is important to note that Bunge la Mwananchi members are not only using and transforming the city by capitalizing on others' forums, they are above all trying to spread their debate all over the city and the country. The members that come to Jeevanjee Gardens come from every corner of Nairobi and its surrounding estates (neighbourhoods), and it is through these members that the debating forums (so-called congresses) will be set up in the aforementioned locations. Aligned to this pursuit, Bunge la Mwananchi members initiated what they call the "Mwananchi Freedom from Hunger Train."

From various often poor and peripheral locations around the city, a commuter train carries people to work in central Nairobi and the industrial area every morning and back home in the evening. On one occasion, likely familiar with the train's winding journeys and the sheer number of passengers that accompany it on its long sojourn, some members of Bunge la Mwananchi boarded the night commuter train with the intention of engaging the Nairobi workers in political discussion. They carried with them 2,500 leaflets titled "Why are President Kibaki and Prime Minister Railia begging Foreigners to feed Kenyans" (Bunge La

Mwananchi, 2010) that highlighted the grave food situation that many Kenyans faced. These leaflets discussed the food crisis in the country and provided salient information to the commuters while also acting as an icebreaker of sorts for these activists. With activities such as these, Bunge La Mwananchi members are taking their political debate out of the park and bringing it to the residents of Nairobi, in this way debating the city. On the one hand, they are debating a specific topic — the city — by discussing issues that affect the majority of Nairobians and Kenyans. At the same time, they are actively carrying out the practice of political debate, that is, debating all over the city while moving through it, while engaging the residents who compose the life that is debated in the city.

Through this political praxis, members of Bunge are mobilizing others to become political. While mobilizing people to participate in political debates and while creating political awareness, they train people to argue and agitate for their political viewpoints, viewpoints that in their difference from the prevailing "common sense" are themselves counter-hegemonic. Furthermore, in debating the city, Bunge la Mwananchi members are transforming the meaning of city space, as what used to be a commuter train for workers is suddenly turned into a rolling political debate forum. A similar point can be made about the congresses set up in the "slums," for a corner at the marketplace in Mathare slum no longer remains just a trading space but is rapidly converted into a venue for political debate. While navigating through the formal and informal public political spaces of Nairobi, the members of Bunge la Mwananchi are working on the city, democratizing it. They practice a politics without boundaries by challenging, transgressing, and expanding the notions of what a given space means by temporarily turning it into a political space, and these moments of spatial appropriation are simultaneously moments of the political (cf. de Certeau, 1988, & Isin, 2002).

Writing on the everyday practices in urban Africa, urban theorist Simone concludes that power in urban Africa "increasingly derives from a capacity to transgress spatial and conceptual boundaries, erasing clear distinctions between private and public, territorial borders, exclusion and inclusion" (2006, p. 357). Through members counter-hegemonic actions that transform both political and physical space, Bunge la Mwananchi, similar to other African organizations such as the aforementioned Abahlali baseMjondolo, is becoming increasingly more powerful as a grassroots organization and conferring knowledge about how to transgress political and spatial boundaries, while above all engendering alternative ways to seek inclusion for those who are put at the most at risk by dominant political interests.

Ironic Practices: Inverting the Meaning of Arrests

Isin refers to Wirth, the Chicago School sociologist who states that groups who are conscious of their oppression and their rights are a political force to be reckoned with (2002, p. 20). We observed this dialectic relation between rights awareness and political power in a number of encounters between Bunge la Mwananchi members and the police. Members of the movement articulated the police's interference with the movement's activities and meetings as an example of the state's violation of their civic rights, but also as the state's implicit recognition of them as a politically influential force. Every now and then, the police interfere in the daily debates at the park in order to stop or disturb the planning of coming events, or as some participants of the movement stated, "to scare people" from engaging in the forum (Bunge la Mwananchi, 2010; Human Rights House, 2010). Though the police interferences had the immediate effect of dispersing most attendants, the interferences also provoked creative resistance against this violent manifestation of state control.

However, not all confrontations with the police are about existing rights. They may also be about gaining new rights by challenging the legal system. Activists from Bunge la Mwananchi have been arrested at different times and charged with incitement to disobedience, idling, and disorderly behaviour, perfunctory charges often laid when the police respond to resistance to the state's dominance. When such arrests occur, other members of Bunge la Mwananchi contact supportive lawyers and often try to mobilize people to go to court and to rally in support of the arrested outside of the courthouse.

One day in December 2008 outside the Kibera Court, a small crowd of Bunge la Mwananchi supporters awaited the hearing of some of their "comrades" who had been arrested for incitement at a demonstration. As the arrested were released, one of them conveyed that she was not concerned about the arrest. It was her third pending case and she had kept a low profile until recently, while another case reached its conclusion. "I can only afford three cases at the time,"[8] she said in a matter-of-fact tone. It took a short investigation to reveal that some of the more engaged activist members of Bunge la Mwananchi deliberately got themselves arrested at public gatherings and demonstrations in order to put pressure on the judicial system in terms of extra workload and extra costs for running minor cases. These deliberate arrests are aimed at exposing what the activists perceive as the absurdity and unjustness of a legal system that criminalizes dissent. As a consequence, these members of Bunge la Mwananchi seek to invert the outcome of the arrests by turning a means of government repression into a burden for the judiciary. Therefore, what on the surface may appear to be a mechanical arrest by a police officer in order to maintain law and order is in fact the result of a political strategy aimed at change.

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[8]   BW, personal communication December 2008.

In rhetoric and linguistics studies the act of inverting the meaning of a given word in order to reveal an underlying meaning is called irony (Burke, 1969, p. 512). The quality of irony not only makes it an obvious tool for uttering or acting out a critique, it also includes a creative element through its ability to transform the meaning of an utterance or act into a different significance. If this definition of irony is applied to the activists' deliberate arrests, these actions can be seen as enactments of irony or ironic practices that are resourceful ways of challenging existing politics (cf. Isin, 2002, p. 26).

Bunge la Mwananchi members' use of irony is not only expressed in subtle ways such as arrests; the ironic mocking of the political elite is central to the movement's counter-hegemonic foundation and is discernable even in its name. As mentioned in the introduction, the English translation of Bunge la Mwananchi is The People's Parliament. By claiming to be a parliament for the people, the movement critiques the real parliament for not representing the ordinary Kenyan people, a critique that they act out in their daily practices.

Bunge la Mwananchi holds elections every two years, and anybody who signs up in advance can vote. At the August 2009 elections in Jeevanjee Gardens, the ballot boxes were made of transparent plastic, an intentional gesture that highlighted the accusations of rigged ballot boxes during the general Kenyan elections of December 2007 and the overall lack of transparency in Kenyan politics. A rewording of the Kenyan national anthem reveals further ironic commentary. On their website, Bunge La Mwananchi members have reworked the second verse, which is full of calls for patriotism, national service, and sincerity. The national anthem had been written hastily in a bid to replace "God Save the Queen," which had been the anthem of the British Empire. The second verse of Kenya's English national anthem reads:

> Let one and all arise
> With hearts both strong and true
> Service be our earnest endeavour
> And our homeland of Kenya
> Heritage of Splendour
> Firm may we stand to defend.

The Bunge la Mwananchi, version however, evokes a less patriotic fervour:

> Let all politicians arise
> With scams both wily and foolproof
> Eating be our earnest endeavour
> And our cake–stand of Kenya
> Heritage of Plunder
> May we fight forever to perpetuate
> (Bunge la Mwananchi Secretariat, Bunge La Mwananchi, 2010)

A further example of Bunge la Mwananchi's attempts at turning things on their head through the use of irony is the aforementioned workshop, "The Kenya we DO NOT want." In addition, in 2007 when Nairobi hosted the World Social Forum, a global grassroots event, Bunge la Mwananchi members arranged a successful Mock Social Forum for the local civil society and grassroots organizations not included in the official event.

In anthropological studies of political rhetoric and everyday resistance, irony and ironic practices are categorized as a tool for opposition and as a weapon of the weak (de Certeau, 1987; Herzfeld, 1997; Paine, 1981; Scott, 1985). The ambiguous character of irony that permits for a word or an action to mean something other than what it seems to mean implies that irony and ironic actions are best suited as responses to other people's statements and actions, as it is dialectic and therefore depends on existing statements and actions to reveal its dualistic potential (Burke, 1969; Paine, 1981). Most oppressed, subjugated, and opposition groups are in positions where they are not in charge of the overall agenda but are charged to react and respond to the

work and actions of a dominant other. The use of irony as a political tool then, requires the ability to take advantage of the moment and the chance openings in creative and spontaneous ways such as when the members of Abahlali baseMjondolo, in response to a declaration that they were criminal and "out of order," fervently asserted that "when order means the silence of the poor then it is good to be out of order" (Abahlali baseMjondolo, 2010). Similarly, Bunge la Mwananchi's use of irony is political as it transgresses and challenges the boundaries established by a hegemonic politic and thus succeeds in revealing the exclusion, the hidden agendas, and the arbitrariness of the "common-sense" means of governance in Kenya

"Setting the Agenda for Our Leaders from under a Tree"

In this paper we endeavoured to convey the transgressions of political boundaries that are evident in the everyday political practices of the Kenyan grassroots movement Bunge La Mwananchi. In this pursuit we have highlighted how members' creative and often counter-hegemonic technologies and transgressions are dependent on space in the city (both political and physical) and how they concomitantly work to redefine, transform, and reclaim these spaces. In this regard, the public park Jeevanjee Gardens, which hosts daily debates, has a central position and provides for the otherwise grassroots character of the movement and the relative fluidity of activities. Though the location of Bunge la Mwananchi meetings could be anywhere, Jeevanjee Gardens' particular history of resistance and democratic struggle succeeds in enriching the counter-hegemonic processes of Bunge la Mwananchi, as it is illustrative of the possibilities that can be garnered by a strong inclusive political praxis.

This analysis was anchored in Isin's (2002; 2005) discussion of the political, which defines political being as the result of po-

litical actions, meaning the ability to question the arbitrariness of dominant governing and governance. We have attempted to turn specific aspects of Isin's genealogical and philosophical argument into applicable tools for understanding and investigating everyday political practices and processes. As Isin's argument departs into a discussion of the notion of citizenship as rooted in the city, we have related his ideas of becoming political to de Certeau's (1988) notions of everyday urban resistance and strategies of spatial appropriation to understand not only how becoming political is linked to the city as a historical institution, but also to reveal how the city as a physical and political space is informed by people's being and becoming political. In addition, in order to articulate Bunge la Mwananchi's practices more profoundly, illustrating their actions towards revolutionary change while also highlighting the local and international power relations that frame Kenyan politics, we felt it was imperative to include some discussions of hegemony as articulated by Gramsci (1971). It is through these complementary scholarly dialogues that we have endeavoured to illustrate Bunge La Mwananchi's praxis, their actions to piece together structures of resistance, which in the not-too-distant future may finally ensure the alternate forms of democracy that are fought for by members of this grassroots movement.

Bunge La Mwananchi members, as we have discussed, perceive and position the movement as an outsider, but as an outsider in search of inclusive change rather than an outsider in search of inclusion within the state hegemony. The fact that non-registration is a deliberate strategy and not a forced position allows Bunge la Mwananchi to transgress the boundaries between formality and informality and to seek ways of questioning and revealing the arbitrariness of the government by actively playing on the ambiguity of being an outsider working on the inside or vice versa. As we have seen, both the marginality and the contradictions inherent in the physical and political space of the move-

ment contribute to the success in pursuing a politics that is boundless. This is coupled with the members' knowledge of the city, a knowledge that allows for the creative pursuance of a political agenda that above all utilizes the temporal and momentary in order to inscribe their message.

In pursuit of this politics without boundaries, Bunge La Mwananchi is placed in a dialogical relationship with the city and in this process both uses and creates the city. It is in this way that members are able to motivate, mobilize, debate, and navigate the blatant and tacit obstacles that are inherent in any political culture that privileges the narratives of the dominant. As anthropologists Das and Poole (2004) have argued, it is often at the margins of the state that alternative political practices are instituted and where political creativity is visible. It is through such deliberate marginal positioning, located under a tree, that Bunge La Mwananchi members, through their resourceful political practices, seek to set the agenda for the political leaders in Kenya. While evoking images of age-old African authority and elders' councils gathered under a tree, it is from under a tree in a city park Bunge la Mwananchi members perform and engender alternative politics, thus bridging tradition and counter-hegemonic creativity in an inclusive politics without boundaries.

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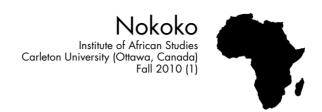Bunge la Mwananchi. (2009). *A Call to Liberation*. Pamphlet.

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Politics Across Boundaries

Pan-Africanism
Seeds for African unity

Gacheke Gachihi

Speaking at a farewell party organized by Chama cha Mapinduzi[1] in Tanzania on his behalf, Mwalimu Nyerere challenged African leaders on the question of African unity and the existing colonial boundaries that divide African communities and which have arrested their growth and development in the 21st century. Mwalimu stated that the boundaries that were imposed by colonial forces during the partitioning/portioning of the African continent divided mother against child, as well as brother against brother, and hindered the social development of Africa. He gave the example of the Maasai community in Kenya and Tanzania who were divided between two colonial forces, the British and the Germans. This is why today you will find communities in Africa such as the Maasai who are divided by colonial boundaries although they belong to the same family: they carry different pass-

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1   Chama cha Mapinduzi means Party of the Revolution in Swahili.

ports and identification cards, but ultimately are tied together by a cultural and historical connection. This example manifests itself from the immigration centres of Kaduna, which connects Rwanda and Uganda, or Namanga, which connects Tanzania and Kenya. It is here that you will find women carrying babies and bananas on their backs as they try to cross borders that are usually fortified by the police. Their crossing is made more difficult as they made more difficult as they attempt to balance immigration paperwork with these babies and bananas, and attempt to navigate the innumerable forms asking for occupation, identity and reason for travelling.

On the 12th and 13th of April 2009, I had the opportunity to attend the Mwalimu Nyerere Intellectual festival as a community organizer with the Bunge La Mwananchi social movement. At this forum, Pan-Africanism was debated. We discussed how Africa can stand on this unified political movement of Pan-Africanism, and organize on the unity of Africa towards political, economic and cultural liberation in 21st century. This intellectual festival injected fresh breath into African politics, which have been dominated by neoliberal policies for two decades since the fall of the Berlin wall and since Francis Fukuyama declared 'the end of history' and the triumph of free markets. Since this period, the political space in Africa has been dominated by neoliberal policies that came with neoliberal model packages of privatization, 'good governance,' multi-party-ism, 'human rights,' all in the name of saving Africa from the political despotism that existed in the era of the Cold War and after.

These neoliberal policies demobilized the African masses and the progressive middle class that was organizing resistance under a Pan-African movement. Furthermore, the progressive ideological politics were attacked and Africa was lectured on how to implement World Bank and IMF policies. In contrast, during the leaderships of Kwame Nkrumah, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, Amil-

car Cabral and Agostino Neto, this African leadership harnessed and forged the Pan-African political instrument that gave birth to new leadership in Africa, which spearheaded the struggle for independence.

The Annual Mwalimu Nyerere Intellectual festival, which is organized by the Mwalimu Nyerere Chair of Pan-African studies at Dar es Salaam University,[2] creates a space for reflection and seeks to draw lessons from the past, from the social struggles that were anchored in a Pan African movement. The last Pan African congress—which was the 7th—was held in Uganda in 1994. Unfortunately, we, the younger generation, have not been able to read and improve on the Pan African resolutions that were agreed upon at this congress, which had been organizational instruments for the independence era liberation movements.

As Africa develops a means of transport that will be linking many of its capital cities, the young generation will interact, political relationships will be forged, and new fruitful contradictions will continue to shape daily lives. This will be a great and much needed opportunityfor a new generation in Africa to forge a united front in creating an alternative, borderless, Pan-Africanist political leadership.

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2   The first and current chair is Dr Issa Shivji.