

(West) African Feminisms and Their Challenges

Naomi Nkealah

Summary

This article highlights some challenges facing a set of African feminisms built on indigenous models. These feminisms are: Motherism – Catherine Acholonu; Womanism/Woman palavering – Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi; Nego-feminism – Obioma Nnaemeka; Snail-sense feminism – Akachi Ezeigbo; Stiwanism – Molar Ogundipe-Leslie; African womanism – Mary Modupe Kolawole; and Femalism – Chioma Opara. The challenges under discussion have been grouped into two categories: (1) inclusion vs exclusion; and (2) conceptualisation and target. This article discusses these challenges by posing a series of questions intended to provoke a critical re-assessment of African feminist theorisation. The article then proceeds to analyse a selection of work from *Women Writing Africa: West Africa and the Sahel* (2005) to see what the creative imagination offers as possible resolutions to these challenges. Two songs in the volume are analysed as part of the endeavour to redefine and prune (West) African feminisms.

Opsomming

Hierdie artikel vestig die aandag op enkele uitdagings wat 'n stel Afrika-feminismes wat op inheemse modelle geskoei is, in die gesig staar. Dié feminismes is: Moederisme – Catherine Acholonu; Vrouïsme/Vrouegepraterij – Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi; Nego-feminisme – Obioma Nnaemeka; Slakkesin-feminisme – Akachi Ezeigbo; Stiwanisme – Molar Ogundipe-Leslie; Afrikavrouïsme – Mary Modupe Kolawole; en Vroueverheerliking (*Femalism*) – Chioma Opara. Die uitdagings wat bespreek word, word in twee kategorieë ingedeel: (1) insluiting vs uitsluiting; en (2) konseptualisering en teiken. Die artikel bespreek hierdie uitdagings aan die hand van 'n reeks vrae wat daarop gemik is om 'n kritiese her-assessering van Afrika-feminismeteorieë te ontlok. Daarna word 'n keur uit *Women Writing Africa: West Africa and the Sahel* (2005) ontleed om vas te stel watter moontlike oplossings die kreatiewe verbeelding bied om hierdie uitdagings te bowe te kom. Twee liedere in die volume word ontleed as deel van die poging om (Wes-)Afrika-feminismes te herdefinieer en te verfyn.

Introduction

Over the past three decades, African feminisms have increasingly emphasised the need to resist cultural imperialism by which the West undermines the philosophical ideologies and belief systems of African peoples. While problematising aspects of culture that denigrate women, scholars have also argued for the retention of African values favourable to “social cohesion” (Nhlapo, quoted in Steyn 1998: 44). Thus, they embrace feminist models that aim to “revise and retain African traditions” (Chigwedere 2010: 24).

In their engagements with feminism, African scholars have likewise condemned the exclusionary practices of white Western feminisms. These exclusionary practices exist at two levels: on the basis of gender where men are necessarily expunged from feminist spaces and dubbed “the enemy”; and on the basis of race where African women are classified as “women of colour” and their historical trajectories are conveniently repressed in feminist theorising (Lâm 1994; Nnaemeka 2013).

African women’s responses to the inequities of Western feminisms have resulted in theorisations of indigenous feminist models that aim to *speak* feminism from (1) an African cultural perspective; (2) an African geo-political location; (3) and an African ideological viewpoint. Emanating from West Africa, and from Nigeria in particular, is a set of indigenous feminisms which have redefined the aims and objectives of feminism in Africa and have reshuffled the feminist agenda for Nigerian women. These feminisms, named and conceptualised with cultural specificity as a guiding framework, provide evidence to the dynamism of African women’s engagements with gender relations (Arndt 2002).

Womanism, the most widely applied theory in literary criticism and simultaneously the most controversial, situates the feminist vision within black women’s confrontation with culture, colonialism and many other forms of domination that condition African women’s lives (Ogunyemi 1985; Kolawole 1997). Sidestepping the controversies around womanism’s privileging of “black women”, who could be anywhere in the world, stiwanism positions itself as “feminism in an African context” (Ogundipe-Leslie 1994: 207), meaning that it is firmly rooted in the experiences and realities of women in Africa (as opposed to African women in the diaspora). Motherism expands the focus on women in Africa by entrusting the rural woman with the task of nurturing society (Acholonu 1995), while femalism and its central concept of transcendence “stresses the female body in the raw” (Opara 2005: 192) as a site of feminist discourse. Both nego-feminism (Nnaemeka 2003) and snail-sense feminism (Ezeigbo 2012) are firmly hinged on a tripod of gender inclusion, complementarity and collaboration, thereby expanding the tenets of womanism. The sensitivity of these feminisms to African women’s diverse experiences of patriarchy,

colonialism, neocolonialism, modernisation and globalisation attests to “the growing orientation of women to contextual specificities” (Obiora 1997: 367) and to the maturation of African feminist intellectualism.

These feminisms have several things in common. First, they resist the label “feminism” in its Western definition. Second, they are theorised on indigenous models, which means the theorists take a look into their histories and cultures to draw from them appropriate tools for empowering women and enlightening men. Third, they are underpinned by an ideology of gender inclusion, collaboration and accommodation to ensure that both women and men contribute (even if not equally) to improving the material conditions of women. The validity of these feminisms in articulating African women’s concerns and goals notwithstanding, some pertinent challenges arise that prompt engagement with them. I have grouped these challenges into two categories: (1) inclusion vs exclusion; and (2) conceptualisation and target. This article discusses these challenges by posing a series of questions intended to provoke a critical re-assessment of African feminist theorisation.

Beyond outlining challenges, it is important to propose possibilities for resolving them. The book *Women Write Africa: West Africa and the Sahel* (2005) presents itself as a valuable tool in this endeavour. On the one hand, it illuminates the profoundness of the challenges facing (West) African feminisms, and on the other hand it presents oral narratives whose philosophical and ideological worldviews offer possible resolutions to these challenges. This article draws on the experiences of the women scholars involved in the Women Write Africa project to illustrate some of its arguments. It then proceeds to analyse a selection of work from *Women Write Africa* (henceforth referenced as WWA 2005) to see what the creative imagination offers as possible resolutions to these challenges. Two songs in the volume are analysed as part of the endeavour to refine (West) African feminisms.

Before discussing the challenges, however, it is important to state that my use of the phrase “(West) African feminisms” is cautious. Although all the theorists are of Nigerian descent (without necessarily being in possession of Nigerian citizenship), it would be wrong to refer to these feminisms as “Nigerian feminisms”, for several reasons. First, the country known as “Nigeria” is a colonial construct. Colonialism lumped together different ethnic groups that were autonomous until subdued by European conquest. To date, Nigerians privilege ethnic identities over a so-called national one. Second, except for Ogundipe-Leslie and Kolawole, these feminists are mainly from the eastern region where the Igbo culture is dominant. They therefore cannot speak *for all* Nigerian women under the banner of “Nigerian feminism”. Research has shown that the western and northern regions dominated by the Yoruba and Hausa respectively, have produced their own feminist models that work according to the demands of their cultures, religions and histories (see Bádéjo 1998; Whitsitt 2002). Third, and

most significantly, most of these feminisms are conceptualised with African women in mind, acknowledging their diverse cultural experiences but also embracing the commonalities in their encounters with patriarchy (see Kolawole 2004; Nkealah 2006). For this particular reason, I consider them legitimately *African feminisms*.¹ But I also acknowledge their insurgence from a specific region – West Africa – which accounts for the specificity of their cultural ideological slants. The preference for “(West) African feminisms” essentially endorses “a movement to give multivalent representation to the voices of African women” (Sutherland-Addy & Diaw 2005: xxxi).

Challenges

Inclusion vs Exclusion

That the theorisation of feminisms has always been marked by exclusionary practices is attested to by Ibrahim (1997: 147) who notes that “any attempt at naming/renaming [feminism] is inclusive of some and exclusive of other experiences”. One of the contradictions of African feminisms is that each brand is conceptualised for a particular segment of the gender-conscious human population to the exclusion of other segments. Motherism elevates the rural woman to the position of a “saviour” in her role as a farm worker and food producer. This rural woman is “the answer to the ever-increasing demand for food”, making her the “economic, agricultural, political, commercial and labour base of every nation” (Acholonu 1995: 118). At the same time, the rural woman gives and nurtures life, provides it with spiritual nourishment, and imparts to it the ancient wisdom it needs to survive. She is “the living personification of the earth and all her rich blessings of love, patience, knowledge, strength, abundance, life and spirituality” (Acholonu 1995: 119).

This romanticised rural woman stands on a pedestal of virtue as an iconic example for the modern urban woman who is bereft of virtue. Motherism’s construction of the rural woman expunges the urban woman from feminist politics. Although motherism advocates partnerships between women and men in alleviating the devastating effects of colonialism on African peoples, it sidelines the urban woman by allocating to the rural woman the “indispensable role” of “ensuring a future for humanity” (Acholonu 1995: 126). Does this mean that the urban woman has no contribution to make? Or is she so adulterated by the poison called modernity and its accompanying stench of urbanisation that her contribution would be detrimental rather than

1. The term “African feminisms” is used here for linguistic convenience only, acknowledging that the theories under discussion have resisted the feminist label by encoding their own renamed labels.

beneficial? In the meantime, contemporary Nigerian women's writing projects modern, educated, economically independent, and assertive urban women, suggesting that "female experience is ... being authentically recreated and female reality is probed and revealed as it is, not as it ought to be, or as it is manipulated to be" (Usman 2012: 251).

Sexual orientation also forms the basis of exclusion in (West) African feminist theorisation. This is both overt and subtle. African womanism overtly rejects lesbianism, while stiwanism subtly dismisses lesbian politics. These feminisms place heterosexual women at the centre of their feminist politics with their emphasis on negotiation with and accommodation of (heterosexual) men – husbands, fathers, brothers and sons. Lesbian, bisexual and transsexual women tend to be completely effaced. Kolawole (1997: 15) claims that "to the majority of ordinary Africans, lesbianism is a non-existent issue because it is a mode of self-expression that is completely strange to their world-view". Does this mean that the minority of women for whom lesbianism is a political act, both to counter heteronormativity and to affirm new sexual identities, cannot be accommodated in African womanism? I think if womanism, or any other brand of feminism for that matter, is to be presented as "a valid African ideology" (Kolawole 1997: 24), it should be constructed as inclusive of all African women irrespective of their sexual orientation.

In describing what she thinks feminism is not, Ogundipe-Leslie (1994: 219) states the following: "Feminism is not a cry for any one kind of sexual orientation and I am not homophobic or heterosexist. Sexual practice in Africa tends to *be* private and *considered* private" (italics in the original). There is a subtle suggestion in this statement that the politics of sexuality is not the business of African feminisms; that sexual orientation is a peripheral matter in the design and execution of African feminisms. Sexuality is cast aside as a "private" matter, and the private is not political in this context.

In the 21st century, where lesbians are being stigmatised and victimised in many African states, it is gravely problematic to subscribe to a feminism that sweeps sexuality issues under the carpet. If African feminisms aim to expose and condemn the manifold forms of oppression African women are subjected to, shouldn't the challenges faced by lesbian women be part of their core priorities? Does not the fact that lesbian women are more vulnerable to ("corrective") rape, social insecurity, physical assault, psychological torture, emotional exile, alienation, and ostracism (all by virtue of not having a male "protector") than straight women demand a revisionist stiwanist framework that puts the needs of these women on the same scale as those of straight women? Interestingly, Ogundipe-Leslie (1994: 223) acknowledges that "feminisms have to be theorized around the junctures of race, class, caste and gender; nation, culture and ethnicity; age, status, role and sexual orientation". (West) African feminisms take all these variables into consideration, but sexual orientation tends to be suppressed.

What are the implications of this for African feminist scholar-ship? Even in South Africa, lesbian politics is still marginalised in mainstream feminist discourse. Mainstream feminism in South Africa has always centred on race, gender and class while questions around sexuality remain largely repressed in literary criticisms, with lesbianism being subject to “silencing” (Murray 2011: 52).

A third thorny issue is whether (West) African feminisms are theorised for continental Africans or diasporic Africans. When these feminists speak of “African women”, who exactly do they mean? Do they mean continental African women or diasporic African women or both? Is the term “African feminism” itself prejudiced towards diasporic women of African descent? It may seem a trivial matter, but in feminist politics practices of inclusion and exclusion are significant. Hudson-Weems (1998: 149), for example, uses the term “Africanans” in postulating her African womanism and she states in her very first sentence that Africanans in the context of her work refer to “continental Africans and Africans in the diaspora”. Do (West) African feminisms espouse the same transcontinental framework? Whose interests do they prioritise – women resident in Africa or those living in Europe and America? The experiences of the women participating in the WWA project highlight similar tensions. The editors of the West African volume report:

The diverse group of people shaping this project did not always share the same vision of Africa or of the project. African-born women and women of African descent, living in exile in the diaspora among other émigrés and exiles and teaching in the academies of the West, were eager to voice their concerns. The largest group, West African scholars and feminists residing in the region, desired to shape a volume that addressed issues internal to the area’s history and needs. A third group, made up of Euro-American scholars, some of whom were Africanists, was aware of the lacunae in knowledge about Africa and the needs of U.S. publishing market.

(Sutherland-Addy & Diaw 2005: xxvii)

This honest report illuminates the extent to which varying interests and visions can create dangerous fault lines in African feminist engagement. Theorising that focuses on the interests of one group of women can easily alienate another group. Moreover, it creates and/or deepens dichotomies (continental/diasporic, black/white, young/old, educated/illiterate, etc.) that breed fragmentation rather than collective action. On the other hand, an all-inclusive theory becomes handicapped by lack of a definitive constituency to put its principles into practice within the delineated context.

Then there is the question of language. Does the highly intellectual language of the theorists take into consideration the linguistic constraints of ordinary literate but not intellectualised women of Africa? While African feminisms are cooked in an African pot (named as such by the cooks) and spiced with indigenous condiments (folklore, traditions, etc.) to satisfy an

imagined African palate, the plate on which they are served is anything but indigenous, for the English language remains a foreign language to many women in both rural and urban Africa. Ogunyemi (1996: 102) problematises this issue when she poses the question: “Who does the [African] woman writer write for, since most of her prime subjects, especially rural women, can neither read nor understand the foreign tongue in which the text is presented?” Similarly, I pose the questions: to what class of African women are stiwanism, nego-feminism and femalism directed, couched as they are in developmentalist lingo, academic jargon, and a highly complex philosophical language? If these theories are expressed in a language that only scholars and graduates of universities (and I mean “polished” graduates, not your average passer) can understand, what are the chances of high school teachers using these texts to educate young learners both on the need for gender transformation and the value of theory in scholarship? Is theory meant for only the elite, or can the fruit-and-vegetable seller on the streets, who is an entrepreneur in her own right, also engage with and learn from it? Documenting their theories using the orthography of a language that is embedded with colonial frames of domination poses a challenge to African feminists.

Conceptualisation and Target

The notion of cultural specificity implies that the particularities and/or specifics of women’s cultural experiences should inform and modulate feminist theorisation. Thus, African women looked into their indigenous cultures to draw on practices, philosophies and worldviews that they felt impact their lives as women and propounded feminist models based on these cultural symbols. As Nnaemeka (2003: 380) states, “African women working for social change build on the indigenous by defining and modulating their feminist struggle in deference to cultural and local imperatives.” The aim was to better navigate the harsh cultural terrain using its own roadmaps and landmarks.

In introducing nego-feminism, Nnaemeka (2003: 376) cites an Igbo proverb (“When something stands, something stands *beside* it”), a Sotho proverb (“A person is a person because of other people”), an Ashanti proverb (“One head cannot go into counsel”), and a Yoruba proverb (“The sky is vast enough for all birds to fly without colliding”). These proverbs underscore the idea of people – irrespective of gender, race or class – working together, and in the process supporting, educating and learning from one another. Nnaemeka (2003: 376) draws on this “knowledge of the African worldview as inscribed in proverbs” to formulate nego-feminism. Building on this indigenous model, nego-feminism is framed as a feminism of “negotiation, give and take, compromise, and balance” (Nnaemeka 2003:

378). Many African women who have grown up in societies that uphold similar values will easily embrace nego-feminism, because it speaks to their cultural understandings of the world. Because nego-feminism resonates with the South African concept of *ubuntu*, it makes itself accessible to South African women who are also involved in feminist projects in both scholarship and activism.²

Snail-sense feminism, by contrast, is likely to alienate South African feminists, because it is packaged specifically for Nigerian women. It uses the snail as a model, a creature whose antics and survival strategies are familiar to Nigerian and West African women.³ Like a snail that traverses harsh terrain with caution, flexibility, foresight, alertness to danger, and the sensibility to bypass obstacles, a snail-sense feminist negotiates her way around patriarchy, tolerates sexist men, collaborates with non-sexist ones, avoids confrontation with patriarchs, and applies diplomacy in her dealings with society at large. As Ezeigbo (2012: 27) states, “it is this tendency to *accommodate or tolerate the male and cooperate with men* that informs this theory which I call snail-sense feminism” (my emphasis). Ezeigbo further draws on proverbs in different Nigerian languages – Igbo, Fulfulde and Yoruba – to buttress her argument on the need for women to adopt a conciliatory rather than a confrontational approach to gender-based oppression. I do not know how many women, including Nigerian women, are comfortable in applying this kind of “avoidance” technique in combating sexism and its many attendant manifestations. Snail-sense feminism seems to be envisioned on the hypothesis that Nigerian women are too conscious of *their place* in society to want to upset the social order, when reality tells a contrary tale. Moreover, it engenders a culture of reactive, rather than proactive, resistance.

Femalism presents its own challenges. It projects the female body as a sign by linking “the freedom of woman to that of the African nation”, and woman thus becomes “Mother Africa susceptible to various manipulations and intrigues” (Opara 2005: 193). This image of the African woman, which is also extolled by motherism, has been found to be problematic by other feminist scholars as it constructs woman purely in symbolic terms, thereby

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2. Gaylard (2004: 265) has noted the resilience of the concept of *ubuntu* in black South African writing, describing *ubuntu* as “transcultural and transhistorical”. That *ubuntu*, loosely translated as African humanism, is also a cherished value in other Nigerian cultures besides the Igbo is evident in Nyitse (2012) who employs Tiv cosmology to situate the feminist-humanism of Nigerian dramatist Charity Angya.
 3. The type of snails being referred to here are land snails (as opposed to sea snails or freshwater snails) with hard shells. These snails are bred in tropical Africa and they grow quite big. They are edible and usually constitute the source of protein in a delicious pot of soup.

robbing her of subjectivity and agency (Driver 1988; Boehmer 1992). Woman becomes what Stratton (1994: 48) calls an “index of the state of the nation”, a trope she affiliates to a male literary tradition hinged on a Manichean allegory. Larrier (2000: 35) exposes the flaws of this tradition in its “representation of woman as the romanticized African past or the corrupt present”, a dichotomy that is clearly masculinist in vision.

Femalism is not grounded in any particular African culture. Rather, Opara (2005: 190) evokes the Western philosophy of existentialism and draws on phenomenology and hermeneutics to explain an “African philosophy of transcendence”. To what extent, then, can femalism be described as a theory that offers “realistic, practical and functional” (Ezeigbo 2012: 26) mechanisms for African women to deal with their everyday challenges? Or is theory completely divorced from practice?

A factor that complicates matters for (West) African feminisms is the question of whether to focus on local imperatives or to extend the scope of the theories to meet global challenges. Ogunyemi (1996: 104) speaks specifically about Nigerian women when she states that “women’s politics has emphasized the interdependence of the sexes as a womanist ideal ... in addressing the multi-faceted Nigerian predicament”. Ogunyemi moves from the premise of global womanism (incorporating both African and African-American versions of womanism) in her 1985 article to that of Nigerian womanism in 1996. This shift from a global feminist perspective to a more culturally/nationally defined agenda signifies unresolved tensions in (West) African feminisms. On the one hand, a global perspective privileges the needs of African women globally, with less focus on the specific needs of continental Africans. On the other hand, a localised perspective means that Nigerian womanism is so narrowly defined as to alienate women from outside Nigeria whose feminist politics are moulded by political environments just as repressive as the Nigerian one.

The paradox of African feminist theorisation is that its emphasis on cultural specificity inadvertently results in cultural alienation for women from other cultures who feel marginalised – consciously and unconsciously – by the dominant culture on whose artifacts and symbols the feminist model is built. Personally, I have often felt alienated from the Igbo culture and worldview on which femalism, motherism and snail-sense feminism are modelled, this notwithstanding the fact that I am married to an Igbo man and grew up in a society greatly influenced by Igbo cosmopolitanism. Lâm (1994: 868) captures this feeling of alienation and distance in her angry retort to a white American (feminist) woman: “Goddamn it! Your feminism is not mine, OK? So buzz off!” Her fury stemmed from sensing that a white woman was imposing on her a feminism she did not associate with. This experience of a Third World woman’s confrontation with white American feminism in practice illustrates an inherent resistance to embrace a feminism

for which one feels a cultural distance, or worse, a complete disconnection bordering on apathy.

Resolutions

Just as (West) African feminisms have looked to oral literature for theoretical inspiration, so can we look into these forms for possible resolutions to some of the challenges facing them. The WWA book contains a number of fascinating oral songs that are instructive. The oral song of the Wolof in Senegal, sung to welcome a new bride, is a good example. The “*Xaxar*” is performed to the accompaniment of drumming and it constitutes “a time of great creativity for women” (WWA 2005: 103). In the song, the first wife welcomes the new wife with satirical greetings, mocking her through innuendos and overt insults of physical ugliness and sexual undesirability. Her friends echo her sentiments by throwing similar insults at the new bride. The following lines illustrate this:

First Wife:

My greetings to you, new bride, like one greets a donkey.
My respects and honor to you, but you’re worse than a bitch.

Chorus of Her Friends:

We greet you, new bride, as we would greet a donkey.
We respect and honor you, but you’re worse than a bitch.
We greet you, new bride, as we would greet a donkey.
We respect and honor you, but you’re worse than a bitch.

First Wife:

Will she stay, the new bride, will she stay?
Will she stay, the new bride, will she stay?
Look at her, this new bride, her skin’s dull and ugly
she is snotty and dirty, and lousy in bed,
Will she stay, the new bride, will she stay?

Chorus of Her Friends:

Will she stay, the new bride, will she stay?
Will she stay, the new bride, will she stay?

(WWA 2005: 103-104)

The words of the first wife convey resentment and undisguised anxiety, because the arrival of the new bride symbolises her displacement in the husband’s affections. Yet, it is in the welcome act itself that her acceptance of the new bride can be situated; it is in the very act of greeting and acknowledgement that she relinquishes space for her co-wife. Thus, this

song epitomises the notion of inclusivity – making room for another while simultaneously asserting one’s authority and ideological stance. (West) African feminisms can apply this principle by acknowledging the varied orientations of African women’s sexuality and accommodating lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) women in their feminist praxis.

Another song to welcome a new bride is that of the Songhai-Zarma of Niger. It is as follows:

Group of First Wives:

The second wife is worthless.
May God curse the woman who is worthless.
The second wife is a stork of misfortune.
Who heralds winter but cannot stay.

Group of Wives in Second Position:

Have they gone mad,
These first wives with their empty heads?
You were brought here.
We were brought here.
Stop the assault.

(WWA 2005: 105)

This song is “an oratorical contest” in which “two groups of antagonists, one supporting the first wife, the other supporting the new bride, confront each other, raising the level of verbal violence” (WWA 2005: 103). It reveals that the second wives resist domination by the first wives by asserting their own voice and authority as legitimate wives. Their command to the first wives to “stop the assault” suggests a heightened consciousness of the politics of space and a profound desire to resist marginalisation. Like these second wives (and this is not an endorsement of polygamy!), African women are sensitive to feminisms that alienate them. And they will, like Lâm cited earlier, stage a vicious resistance to such feminisms. Yet, they can develop a sense of ownership of these feminisms, if they so wish, by subjecting them to scholarly refinement. Formulating new theories is innovative, but it is not the ultimate solution, as new theories breed new challenges.

Conclusion

Speaking about the role of Nigerian drama in making moral statements, Charity Angya (quoted in Nyitse 2012: 188-189) states that “solutions can be proffered but ... all of life’s issues cannot be resolved by straight clinical solutions”. Such is the case with the challenges facing (West) African feminisms. Some of them can “only be resolved through painful compromise” (Sutherland-Addy & Diaw 2005: xxvii), and others not at all.

The scholarly efforts of Acholonu, Ogunyemi, Ogundipe-Leslie, Kolawole, Nnaemeka, Opara and Ezeigbo to chart a feminist course for Nigerian women in particular and African women in general is laudable, but the challenges raised in this article suggest that continuous scholarly efforts need to be invested in refining and reaffirming the feminist vision for (West) African women. Engaging with the oral narratives of women in West Africa, as recorded in *Women Write Africa*, is a starting point.

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Naomi Nkealah
UNISA
nkealne@unisa.ac.za